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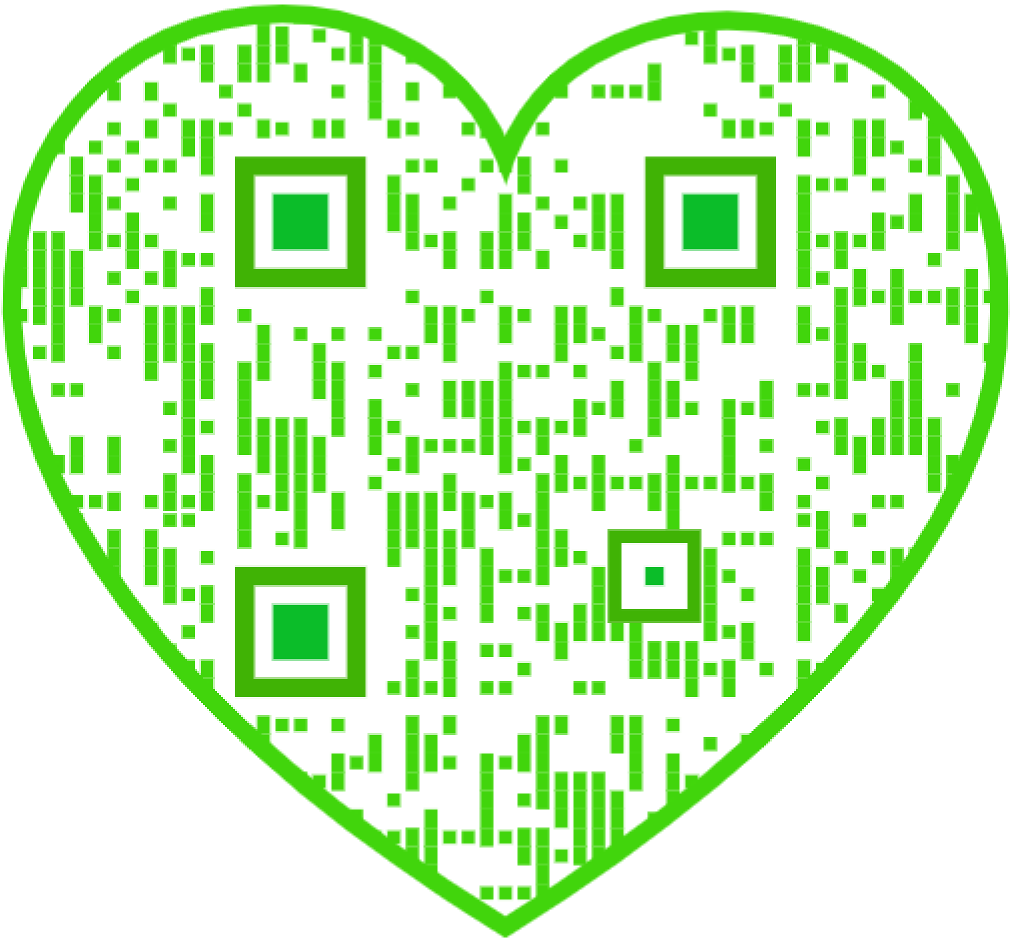

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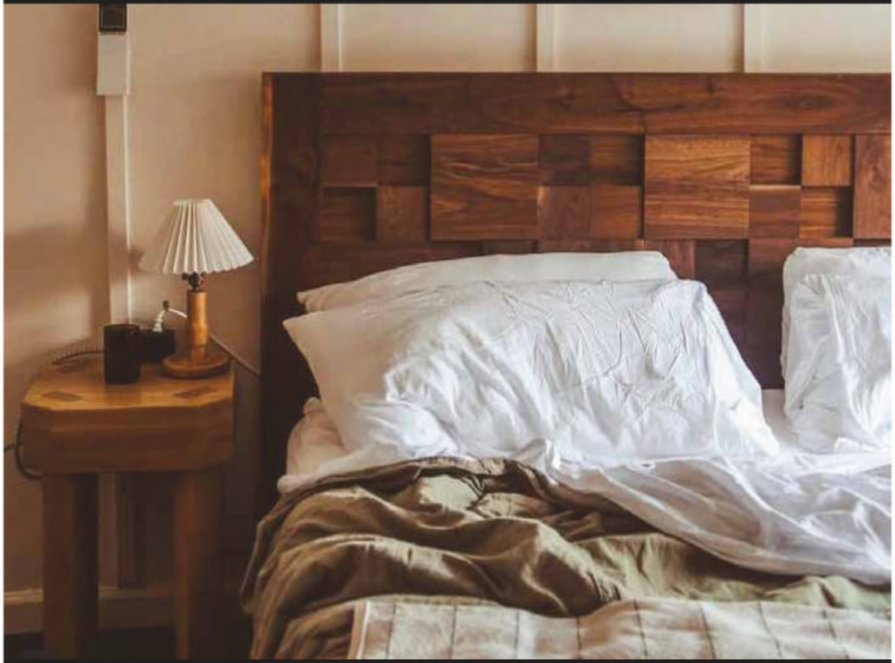

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HEALING WORDS

"The Healing Woods" (*Short Carries*, February 2025) was a very inspiring article. Those of us who are lucky enough to enjoy the Adirondacks can well identify with its healing powers and can just imagine the joy that Martha and Fred shared during their camping trips.

My husband saw me reading the *Adirondack Life* article and—using the magic of the Internet—tracked down Martha Reben's book for me for Christmas. The book has yellowed pages but otherwise is in good shape and I can't wait to read it. An added bonus: the beginning of each chapter has a beautiful woodcut illustration by Fred Collins.

Angela Fink
Navarre, FL and Long Lake, NY

THE STOOGES

I worked 30 seasons at Gore ("Learning How to Fall," February)—I never thought my photo would be in your magazine.

Joe [Connelly]'s initiation, the kangaroo courts, adventures with Rick, and priming the Egg Man ... Bean Dip will be happy there is a story, after all.

Thanks for the memories!

Donald Townley, aka "Moe"
Johnsburg, NY

LIFE SUPPORT

I was fascinated as I read "Tahawus" (December 2024), about a place in the Adirondacks that no longer exists. Then the author Joan Burke hit me with a two-by-four when she wrote, "My father was killed in a work accident, he was 35." Joan described how friends stepped in to help, becoming like family. This brought back memories for me, as my father died in 1961 at 33 years old from Hodgkin's Disease. I was five; my sister was seven. We had a wonderful extended family that became extra dads, moms and bothers and sisters to my sister and me.

Some say that time heals all wounds, but they're wrong. Time changes you so you can live with the wounds.

Thank you for a therapeutic article.

Chuck Dunbar
Newfane, NY

Adirondack Life
HOW TO WINTER
FEBRUARY 2025

A DOG'S LIFE

I enjoyed Annie Stoltie's "Classic Tails" (*Short Carries*, December) very much and I'm writing to attest to the fact that there *are* true Adirondack dogs! I have three: Flip, a short-hair Chihuahua; Bam Bam, a long-hair Chihuahua; and Farley, a Cardigan corgi.

Here is proof: Upon arrival at our camp on Charley Lake in Wells, as I open the truck door the dogs practically fall out, vying to be first. Down the stone steps toward the lake they go, across a small creek to the neighbors' deck, where you hear the dogs being greeted—"Oh, look who's in!" (These mountain dogs are looking for the bologna roll-ups the neighbors always give them.) After this cordiality, Flip and Bam return to find their favorite pillow to nap.

At this point I'm on my deck, into my first Northway Perfect Day pilsner. Farley eventually returns after his swim in the lake. He shakes off when he reaches my chair to let me know the lake is warm enough to swim. He takes a moment to lick the top of my can for a taste, usually knocking it over for a few more hearty licks, then finds a shady spot for his nap.

So there you have it, Annie—proof that there are true Adirondack dogs. They know good food, good beer, the cooling effects of a swim and the best places to nap.

Bill and Sue Howe
Camp Salubrious, Wells, NY

DEW DROP REBOUND

I saw your article on the return of the Dew Drop Inn, in Saranac Lake (*Special*

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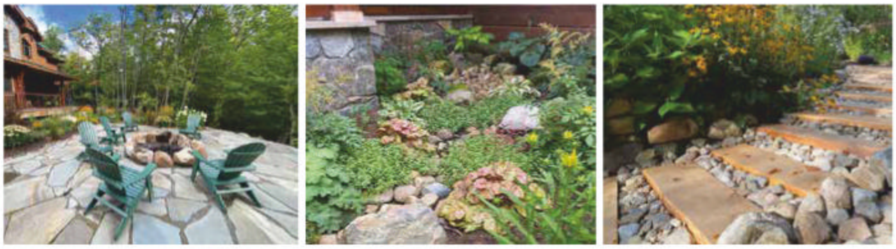

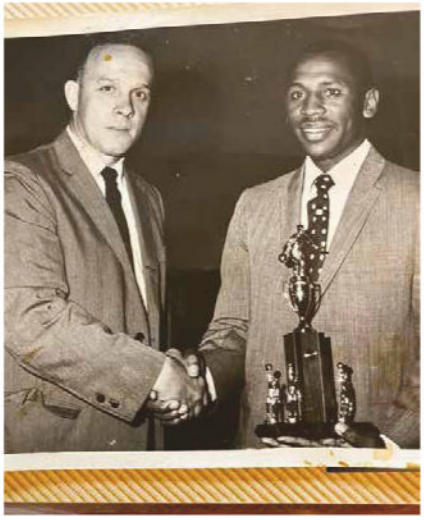

Places, April 2024). During my junior year at Paul Smith's College, 1967–1968, our basketball team represented the Dew Drop Inn in a tournament, which we won. (The trophy is still in the Paul Smith's College trophy case, which I last saw when I visited the school in the 1980s.) As a reward, the team received a complimentary spaghetti dinner.

Reading your article brought back fond memories of my time in Saranac Lake. I was an inner-city African-American kid from Philadelphia, and totally out of my element. President Buxton and Coach Dudek—the latter, with the trophy and me, above—were instrumental in my success at the school.

I am pleased to hear that the inn is reopening.

John Hightower
via email

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Short Carries

BETSY AND DOGS AND ACW PHOTOGRAPHS BY NANCIE BATTAGLIA. *ADIRONDACK LIFE* OFFICE PHOTOGRAPH BY MATT PAUL

An Adirondack Legend

My mentor, Betsy Folwell

BY ANNIE STOLTIE

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: **Betsy Folwell on Owls Head, in Keene, 2003. Betsy with the author at *Adirondack Life*, in 2009, and in spring 2024 at an Adirondack Center for Writing event.**

The woodcock's mating dance, venison recipes, Great Camp china, reading winter skies, the history of the Adirondack Park Agency, balsam pillow–making, wolf genealogy, growing hops, skiing blind, antler science, blowdown aftermath, invasive species, antique boats. Was there anything in the park Betsy Folwell didn't know about or write about? Nope. She was an Adirondack legend.

My life changed when Betsy hired me at *Adirondack Life* 25 years ago. Though I'd grown up near the Adirondacks, I'd been at a mainstream women's magazine in New York City—the antithesis of *Adirondack Life*. Betsy's regional fluency was intimidating. And then there was this big and complicated park. Her way of mentoring me was to send me out of the office at least once a week to hike mountains, explore towns, attend events, meet people and, basically, just get lost. The writing and editing part involved Betsy's patient direction, her suggestions to excavate deep beneath a subject's surface, and to uphold the editorial standard our readers expect. I wanted to get it right and make her proud. I still do.

In the early 2000s cartoonist Mark Wilson painted a birthday card for Betsy. He depicted her with her trademark ginger hair, behind bars, dressed in an orange jumpsuit and scratching lines onto the wall. Above her were the words "Adirondack Lifer."

By then Betsy had been at the magazine since the late 1980s. For some jobs it's critical to separate your work from your identity. But at *Adirondack Life*, that's impossible, because to get to the heart of this place you have to live it. That's what Betsy did.

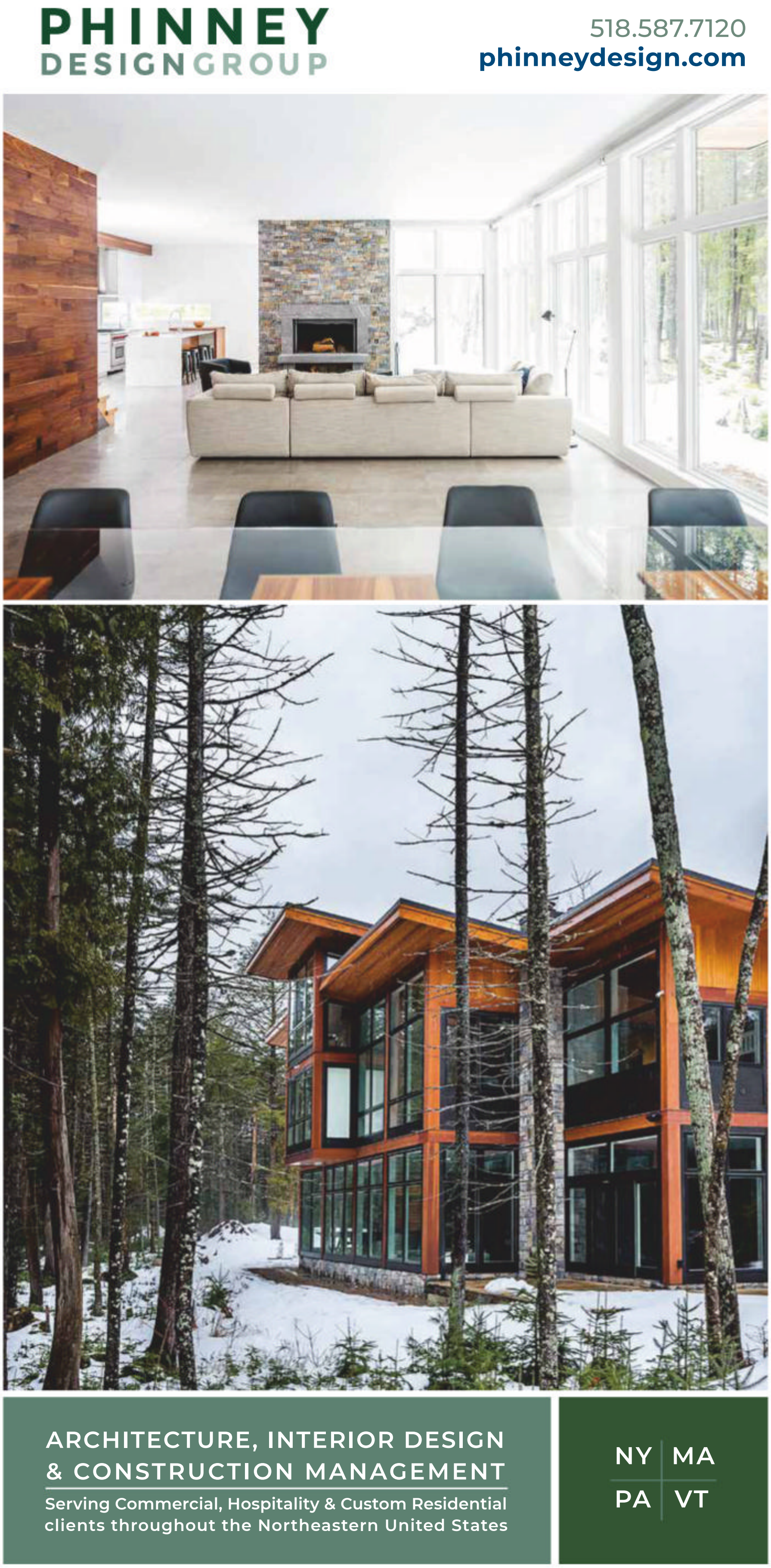
In her office in Jay's brick church, there was a sign on her wall that said, "If wishes were fishes." Atop a file cabinet an old dictionary the size of a beer cooler was usually open, a lifeline before the days of spellcheck and Google. And always, Betsy was there, tapping away on her keyboard, her focus unrelenting. Whatever calamity crashed into her, she'd work through it—the *tap, tap, tap* from her office after she lost vision in both of her eyes and, after that, when she was diagnosed with cancer. Still she worked, and still, with her husband, Tom Warrington, she took on Herculean projects, such as moving their 1915 farmhouse in Blue Mountain Lake—actually hauling it to a higher spot—for a better view of their hamlet's iconic peak. Or most recently, working to restore the *Tuscarora*, a 1900s-era passenger steamboat that chugged the waters of Blue, delivering vacationers to the grand hotels that once lined the lake.

Betsy retired in 2020, but we continued to connect about family, friends and the magazine. She consulted on stories and offered ideas, always dishing the park "scuttlebutt," as she called it. I'd send her my articles, usually struggling with an ending, and she was forever showing me the way, her suggestions more elegant and meaningful than anything I could come up with.

Betsy never stopped contributing to *Adirondack Life*. Even as sick as she was the last few months, she planned to write about the *Tuscarora*, about a carpenter from Indian Lake who helped rebuild Notre Dame, and Raquette Lake—a summertime package detailing where to swim, hike and paddle.

At the end of December, a week before Betsy passed away, I got to hold her hand, hug her and tell her what she meant to me. The conversation drifted back to *Adirondack Life*. She reminded me to "bring the joy."

On that visit I looked through the window above Betsy's bed and hoped she could feel the warmth of the late-morning sun. That's when I noticed what was leaning against the windowsill—the card Mark had made for her all those years ago. Adirondack Lifer.



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REMEMBERING BETSY

Elizabeth "Betsy" Folwell

(1953–2025)

PHOTOGRAPH BY NANCIE BATTAGLIA

Betsy, who was born in Racine, Wisconsin, didn't get her first glimpse of the Adirondacks until 1976, when she was driving to a job interview at what was then the Adirondack Museum, in Blue Mountain Lake. She described the experience in a 2009 interview with North Country Public Radio: "Coming down the hill and seeing the view unfurl in front of me, that was one of those defining moments, 'Oh, I'll stay here.'" She was 23.

Betsy landed the job as the museum's first education coordinator and she did stay, for almost 50 years. In 1980 she moved to the Adirondack Lakes Center for the Arts, also in Blue, acting as its director until 1988.

She wrote her first article for this magazine in 1988, joining the staff a year later, first as assistant editor, then editor and finally creative director and publisher. Over the years she absorbed everything Adirondack, and in 1992 put it all together in the park's first comprehensive guidebook, *Adirondack Book*, which went through multiple editions. In 1997 she cowrote *Adirondack Odysseys: Exploring Museums and Historic Places from the Mohawk to the St. Lawrence*.

In 2009, Betsy published *Short Carries: Essays from Adirondack Life*, a collection of her writings on nature, community and history, which won both the Adirondack Literary Award and People's Choice Award from the Adirondack Center for Writing, an organization she helped found.

Betsy always pitched in where it counted. Seeing a need in her adopted hometown, she and her husband, Tom Warrington, ran a general store and joined Blue's volunteer fire department. Later, she worked to revive the Indian Lake Theater and served on the board of the Adirondack Land Trust. A handful of years ago, she and Tom hauled a 1946 diner car from Ohio during a blizzard. They rehabbed the space and helped launch Chef Darrell's Mountain Diner, so the community would have a place to meet and eat.

In 2007, she was presented with the Adirondack Museum's Harold K. Hochschild Award, which recognizes community leaders for their contributions to the region's culture and quality of life; in 2002, the Adirondack Council honored her with its Park Communicator Award.

Betsy retired from *Adirondack Life* at the end of 2020, though she never stopped exploring, engaging and writing. Throughout her career, she'd rubbed elbows with early Adirondack icons, as well as superstar writers and photographers, but she saved the biggest share of her attention for the everyday creatures and characters who lived alongside her. In 1989, for the magazine's 20th anniversary, she wrote of this land that she loved, "You can touch the past here, the corners of a vista are held down with other people's memories."

Donations in Betsy's memory may be made to the Adirondack Foundation's Small Wonders Fund for the Central Adirondacks, or to any of the organizations that she supported, including the Adirondack Center for Writing, Adirondack Land Trust, Adirondack Architectural Heritage, and the Steamboat Tuscarora Preservation Project.

Read Elizabeth Folwell's essay "Following a Thread," first published in our 50th anniversary issue, on page 15.

REMEMBERING BETSY

I was four years into ski bumming and two years out of college when I met Betsy in the summer of 1993. I got tipped off that she was at Desperado's, in Lake Placid, eating dinner; I walked in and asked for an internship. Never mind that she only accepted undergrads. She took pity and made an exception.

Betsy schooled me up on widows and orphans, kerning and leading, the *Chicago Manual of Style*, the passive voice (tsk), and words and phrases to avoid ("very," "unique," "very unique"). She hated lazy, clichéd, predictable writing; she weaned me off almost all my bad habits except procrastination.

My internship ended; I got lucky again and was hired as assistant editor and stayed another dozen years. On her watch we went from seven issues a year to eight. Deadlines loomed. We'd put the magazine to bed—packing actual physical things like galleys and slides and original artwork, and then shipping it to the printer—then a bunch of us from art and edit would go to High Peaks Base Camp, in Upper Jay, for pizza and beers. I made lifelong friends in the Brick Church.

Betsy was fearless and protective, nurturing both editors and writers. She made good ones great and great ones truly shine. Her prose was economical, understated, sublime; her pitch-perfect, lyrical essay "Why We Bagged It," about her and Tom's foray into small-town storekeeping, remains one of the finest pieces of magazine writing I've ever come across.

It's not in the least bit shocking to those who knew Betsy that her contributions to the Adirondacks—in both word and deed—will still be measured many decades hence. At the risk of sounding cliché, she may have lost her sight, but her vision never wavered.

GALEN CRANE

Betsy lived pretty much at the geographic center of the Adirondacks, which makes sense because she was in many ways the Park's beating heart. No one, I think, had traveled these communities more widely, knew more people, helped with more projects, provided more links. Even—or maybe especially—as blindness limited her wanderings, it seemed to intensify her ability to connect with this place. If the Adirondacks is, as I've always thought, a great experiment in whether people and nature can make their livings in the same place, then she was the researcher guiding that experiment, interpreting its results—and doing everything she could to make it come out right. It's not just the people who knew her that are pausing in memory; the hemlocks bow their tops a bit in recognition, and the waters of the lakes ripple with unseen breeze. The great loss of her passing is proof of the great power of her life.

BILL MCKIBBEN

I never heard Betsy complain about her sight being taken away—imagine a lifelong writer who suddenly can't read what she's writing—but she did complain about the primitive text translator she had to use, the robotic voice she said couldn't read any rhythm in the work. So the next story I sent her I made a tape of myself reading, and to jazz it up I drove to Santa's Workshop, in Wilmington, and did the reading there, with the elves of summer singing behind me. It got a laugh, which is all that mattered. Betsy could be all business, and then that laugh would hit you out of nowhere. Like the best writers and editors I've met, she matched a ruthless attention to craft with a love of all that's unbalanced in the world, the quirks of nature, both human and not, that give those elves their song.

JOE CONNELLY

So, what do we know?" Betsy would ask, her kickoff to a car ride or dinner. At *Adirondack Life* Betsy was arbiter of all that was officially known about the Adirondack Park. As someone who lived deep inside the park and one of few people to travel all of its 92 towns, Betsy was also the merry pollinator of the unofficial Adirondacks.

She had the scoop on everything—the best dish at the best restaurant in Old Forge or Olmstedville, what billionaire paid how much for what camp, who their caretakers were, how to find an obscure canoe put-in, where pink water lilies bloom. Once I offered what I thought was mint gossip about a local politician. Betsy's sly reply, "I knew that in November."

Betsy had friends far and wide, and after she lost much of her sight she stitched rides together along the 80 miles from home in Blue Mountain Lake to work in Jay. I was part of that thread, and there was no better Adirondack travel companion. She was funny, irreverent and omniscient. Her writing will continue to delight and awe, but I wish we could talk. There are still so many things I want to ask her.

MARY THILL

We like to think our destinies are ours to choose, but Betsy's death has got me thinking. If she hadn't edited my first story for *Adirondack Life*, and kept on as my editor for my first decade, would I have made this region my home? I'm guessing probably not. But because the Adirondacks that intrigued me beguiled my new editor as well, I had, from the beginning, an advocate who gave me so much room to root around in under-the-radar social history I not only got lost in it, I'm still getting lost, and still indebted to the gift of my first editor's good faith.

And now multiply my experience by all the writers she encouraged and improved over so many years, and add to them the editors she brought along and boosted, and then the non-writers, the friends (so many!), neighbors, educators and environmentalists who also felt the easy light of Betsy's influence, the boon of her keen interest.

If you are reading this, you know just what I'm talking about—what it meant to have Betsy in your corner, pointing out the angle, the strategy, the language that could make a project more achievable, more winning. And not by arguing or preaching or command. Not her style. In that low, steady, sultry voice of hers, she just made sense. Couldn't help herself! It was always, thrillingly, enough.

AMY GODINE

Visit www.adirondacklife.com for more tributes to Betsy.

Following a Thread

On the ghosts of Blue Mountain Lake

BY ELIZABETH FOLWELL

This time at Cold River—the last time—his touch was light as pollen, no snapped twigs or bootprints on the familiar trail. It was the place Gordon returned to no matter where he was, Blue Mountain Lake or Tahawus, a tiny clearing with a cabin no bigger than a queen-size bed, notched logs standing teepee style, another shed with the necessaries of Noah John's life. The hermit was a contrary solitary, though, a gregarious recluse who loved the campers who dropped in.

There's a photo of Rondeau with Gordon's wife seated in front of a shack labeled "Beauty Parlor." Perched on a stump, she's smiling, the woodsman plucking her eyebrows with a pair of clamshells from the lake. At least that's how the photo is remembered; the album with these once-vivid scenes was reduced to sodden gunk after a box of old stuff got flooded in a basement thousands of miles away.

Is there a name for the ghosts of photographs? The way we can conjure up something two-dimensional from somewhere we've never been is like hearing the old stories third- and fourth-hand, but valuable all the same, our way of inserting ourselves into the long narrative of a particular place.

Sometimes the relics remain absolutely real, though the person behind them has diminished into a few sentences, maybe a paragraph, as the people who once kept the flicker of extremely local history alive fade beyond embers. Years ago I bought a pack basket at a yard sale, the archetypal full-belly style big enough to carry a toddler or haunch of venison. The ash splints are uniform, the work of someone who knew well how to weave tightly for the ages. The details, though, are strictly mid-20th century: the straps are cheap men's belts affixed to the oval rim with Romex wire.

The man who made the basket lived in a sugar shack way back in the woods, the arch and buckets gone, replaced by cot, table, kerosene lantern, wood stove. He had an early-warning system for his nearest neighbors—if the lantern was still outside after dark then something was wrong. So one night that light brought people trudging through the trees, only to find an elderly man in the closing of his very last chapter. I am sure that Joe the Frenchman could have told a long story of his circumstances, how he landed outside Blue Mountain Lake in a smoky shed as he grew older and older. But the people who knew the stories, who listened as they were repeated once he was gone, well, they're mostly gone too. The pack basket is no ghost artifact, but its maker lingers in the shadows.

I walk our road most nights, looking at houses now dark after summer's end, and see a few that may never be bright again. On these forays, cars rarely pass and deer peer out from the forest edges around the buildings. Here's where Kathy lived, thin as a pipe cleaner and tough as a hand-forged nail, a widow who split her own firewood with a very sharp ax and single-minded determination—all the while listening to public radio. She had been the teacher in the town's schoolhouse, her students now all gray-haired, bald or gone. When she passed away, we all mourned her but none so much as the turkeys, deer and raccoons who saw her place as the finest restaurant in town.

Across the way Harvey lived, a storytelling charmer, exactly the kind of old-timer you'd expect from such a town. He reveled in the tall tales and wild lies that entertained no matter how

Elizabeth Folwell paddling on Blue Mountain Lake, 1996.

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many times you heard them. Gone 20 years, would the shiny objects of modern life render him tiresome? Or would he be relegated to quaint anachronism, an artifact to be trotted out for a festival to illustrate traditions?

A little farther, just an arm's length from the cement-block building with telephone equipment (is that destined to disappear as well?) trees crowd a surprisingly ornate gravestone, erected in 1888 for Johnie, age "10 years, 1 month and 22 days." The fact of this death is the last true fact of his life. There's no cemetery nearby, no slumped ground marking an ancient homestead. Summer joggers and cyclists pass every day, unaware the monument is there, even less aware of the boy it honors.

Next to this spot was a parking lot—some might say junkyard—where a man known as "Yes Yes" Mitchell lived in a car. He earned that name because he started every conversation with "Yes! Yes!" whether it was a question or an answer or an observation. But that's about as much as I know about him, a person reduced to a nickname.

I keep walking, past the spot (now a modern building) that had been a popular tavern, serving townsfolk and millionaires alike. One wealthy patron kept a team of mules and a wagon long after everyone else was driving cars to bars. But Mr. Hollingshead had only to stumble out of the place, clamber onto the seat and cluck to his team to be delivered to his grand home two miles away. Back in the woods was the "jackass barn," where the steadfast mules lived for many years. It faces a stream, and now the rush of water is the signature sound, not hooves shuffling in sawdust.

Across the street from the former commercial complex of store (leave your money in a basket on the counter, take a gallon of milk), gin joint and living quarters, what had been proudly built as an ecumenical library for the enlightenment of summer folk in the 1890s is now a church. Beyond that is a boardinghouse, empty most of the time. Further is a three-story inn, crouched behind massive cedars. Before my time, there were dances here, barrels of beer, rooms

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for travelers of any stripe. Across from that is a new structure, on the footprint of what had, over time, been a hotel (William West Durant signed the guest register), a dry-goods store, a laundry, a home. Somewhere on the lake bank are heaps of broken whiskey bottles now reverting to glassy gravel.

I pass the firehouse, with its additions and improvements, once the heart and lungs of community life with pancake breakfasts, perpetually out-of-tune piano and a formidable team competing in the annual county-wide firemen's field days. An attic purge a few years ago yielded a case of programs from the June 1939 event, with pages where spectators could keep score in races like booster hose, ladder climbing and motor pumping from draft. The ads—for Fuller's Garage, Bernard Ross's Esso station, Pat's Blue Mountain Lake Restaurant and LaPrairie House—show a vibrant assortment of businesses, most of which are not just gone but passed into the compost of memories, jumbled and decayed yet part of this place all the same.

By the lake and a sweep of beach that countless photographers have claimed for their own walls, is a cottage colony dating back four generations within the same family. It was, and still is, where people return every summer, their children and grandchildren rekindling relationships bounded by lake, lawn, cabins and trees. Gradually some buildings have disappeared, including one that served sardine sandwiches for a quarter.

Eventually I reach the gas station, now a seasonal convenience store with pumps operating 24/7 but formerly a Texaco station, a white beacon to the motorists prowling these deserted roads. Back in the day, you could get political commentary, ice and worms as well as highway maps and a full tank of leaded.

If a tree falls in the forest, another tree will take its place, its leaves reaching for the light. When many trees crash down in a windstorm, natural cycles begin the long process of renewal. Can the same be said for tiny settlements that once were intact human ecosystems? There's a tipping point or even many

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little teeter totters that dip downward. It's easy to satisfy needs and wants by leaving town, whether by car or global device. The tide may be turning, though, with new businesses occupying historic spaces: the old schoolhouse has lattes and scones, the former Elbow Room, walls plastered with lipstick graffiti, is a brew pub.

Why care about somewhere that seems more story than substance? The Chinese have a myth called the red thread, a force that connects present to future, to persons unborn, events yet to unfold. It links hearts worlds apart. It's fate, destiny and hope spun together. Here I'm following a blue thread, gathering up what I can, sniffing out faint scents, walking deserted streets, acknowledging vacant buildings and clearings, taking a highly inexact census.

The blue thread is a tangle running backwards, tying the physical world to a single community made of so many different souls representing vast bodies of knowledge. That old man whose ashes floated down on Cold River country knew where to gather buckets and buckets of wild cranberries late each fall, and he never got lost in the woods even if he was 20 miles from home. The previous owner of our house talked about nibbling "trinkle root," from a nondescript woodland plant with tiny white flowers. It was spicy, she said, crunchy, a snack she could grab on her way home from school. Have I ever found this plant? Nope, and not for lack of trying along the trail I know she walked.

This town had people who could stuff a raccoon, fix steam engines, give a baby-bottom-smooth shave with a straight razor, sew perfect pleats with a treadle machine and had mastered many other arcane tasks of everyday life. Though there's some evidence of all these things, that frayed blue thread won't weave a whole cloth in the 21st century; maybe I could darn a sock with it. All the same, I keep feeling for the filaments and knots that tie us together, present to past, person to place, a place we called home then—and still do now.

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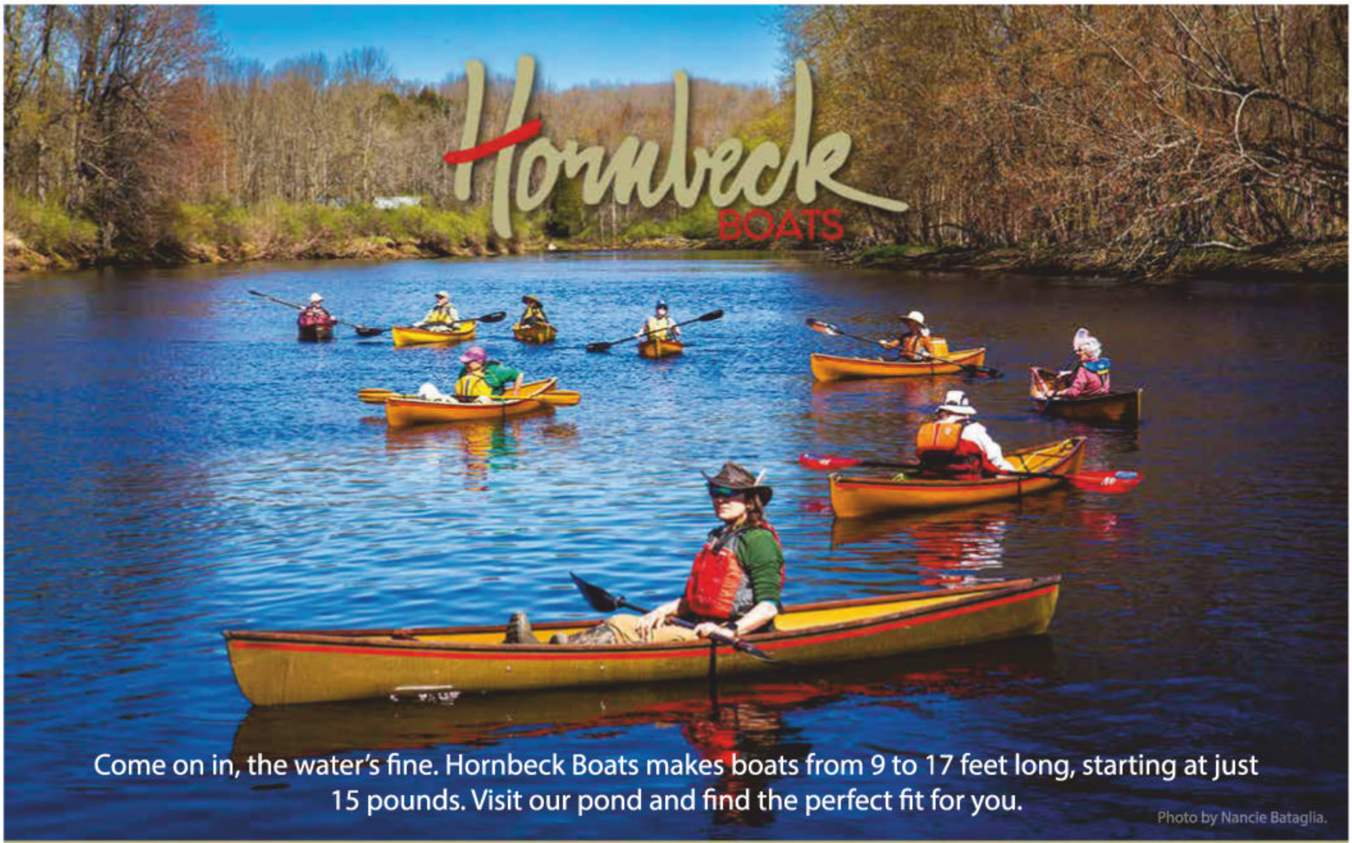

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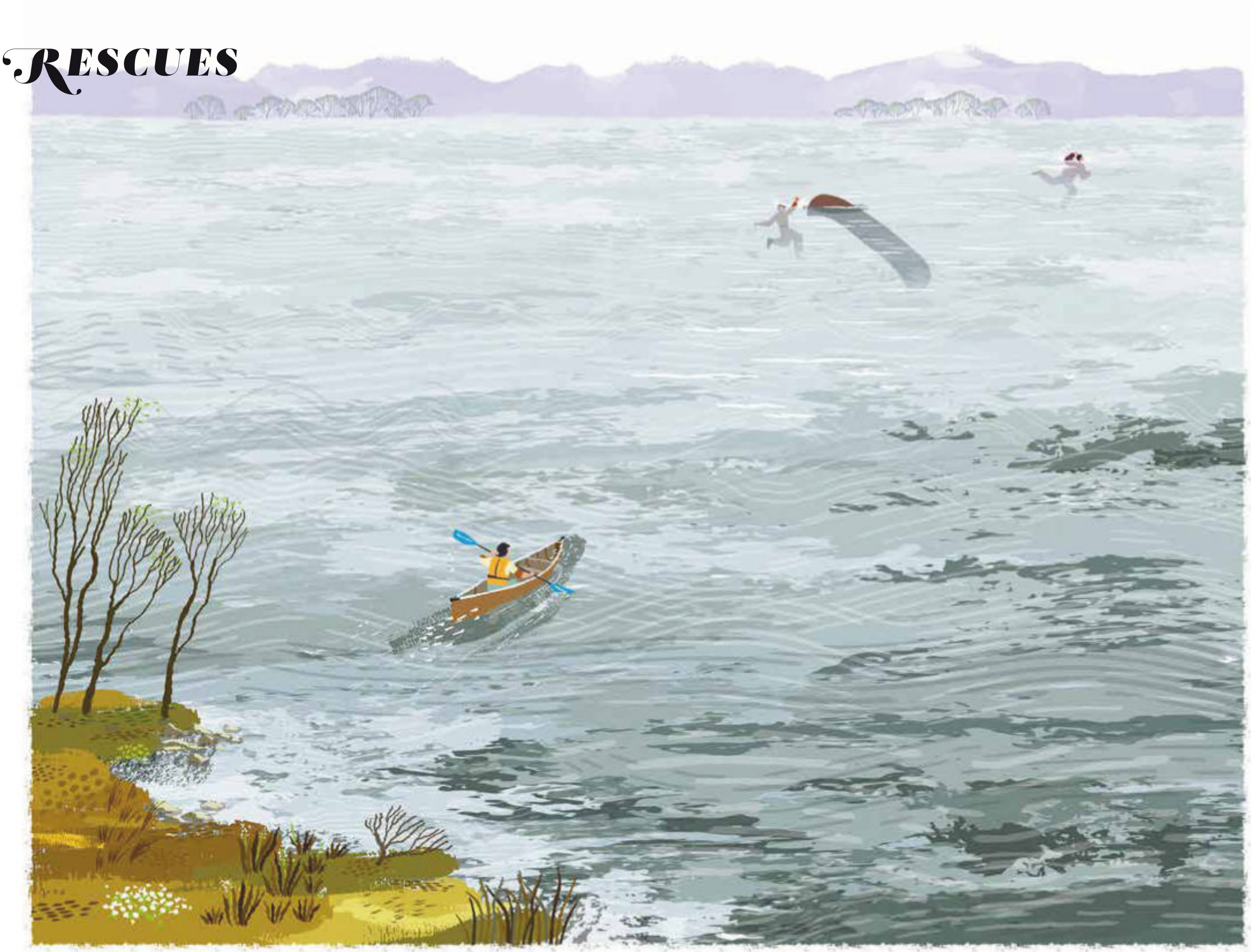

ILLUSTRATION BY GWEN VOGEL JAMISON

Call to Courage

Cold water and quick thinking on West Caroga Lake

BY MARTHA PRICE

As he approached the shoreline, Paul Bohlander became aware of a tragedy unfolding—a canoe had overturned and two people were screaming for help.

Late April 2016, spring was in the air with the promise of the return of blooms and loons. At West Caroga Lake, the quiet solitude of long winter months was drifting away with the last vestiges of ice along the shoreline.

It was too early for the long-awaited bustle of docks, rafts and boating gear near the camps, cabins and even the year-round homes. Most “snowbird” summer residents were still in the process of getting ready to head north to rake leaves and locate their fishing poles.

On that morning, jumping into the 40-degree lake was not in Paul Bohlander’s plans. He’d been spending some time by himself at his family’s camp and was strolling around the property with a mug of hot coffee. Midmorning the temperature was about 60 degrees; the breeze was mild and the sun was glorious. However, as Paul approached the shoreline, he became aware of a tragedy unfolding. A canoe had overturned and two people were screaming for help as they tried to swim to safety in the frigid water.

Quickly scanning the area, Paul saw no one else nearby. He had just minutes to perform a miracle before exhaustion, hypothermia and unconsciousness would overwhelm the couple struggling in the lake.

Swimming to reach the pair was out of the question—he’d never help them in time. But Paul remembered that his next-door neighbor chained and locked a canoe to a tree every winter. Astonishingly, when Paul reached the canoe on the shore, it had not been secured. He raced full speed to his garage to find three life preservers and ran to his camp for a kayak paddle.

In minutes he was on the water. Paul—a 6'8" former collegiate division-one basketball player, avid hiker, kayaker and bicyclist—was comfortable with the rhythm of paddling, but had not been in a canoe in years. And he had never experienced a capsize event. The challenge ahead was terrifying.

As Paul paddled towards the couple, he waved and called out to assure them they would be OK, that he was coming to help them. He saw that neither wore a life preserver, and their wet clothes and shoes made it difficult for them to stay above the surface of the water.

In minutes, after strong-arm paddling, Paul reached the young woman who was trying to hold on to the now-submerged canoe. She frequently sank beneath the water. She appeared to be very close to drowning.

The young man, who had started to swim towards the north shore, was now about 50 yards away from the woman and their canoe.

Paul, not a person who often raises his voice, had to assume a position of authority to try to lessen the panic.

At this point, Paul's hands were cold and numb, and he was shaking from head to toe. Somehow, he stayed on task, calculating how to get the couple into his canoe without capsizing it. Because of his height, Paul figured that he could best help by placing himself as low as possible in the canoe to steady it as each person climbed in. He hoped they both had the strength to pull themselves aboard, because he could not fully assist them while maintaining balance.

The woman was cooperative and motivated as she held on to the side of Paul's canoe to rest, then climb aboard. She crouched low, as directed by Paul, who kept reminding everyone that "if this canoe capsizes, we will all drown." Having swallowed so much lake water, the woman began to vomit. But Paul had to turn his energy toward the young man. He paddled towards him and then maneuvered him into the canoe. Life preservers were distributed, and a sigh of relief was shared by all three.

At this point a decision needed to be made about whether to take the couple back to Paul's warm camp and contact 911 for an ambulance, or to return the

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couple to the place where they were staying so they could change out of their soaked clothes.

The couple were staying with friends in a cabin across the lake and wished to return there, so Paul, so exhausted that his muscles burned in pain, paddled in that direction.

The lake rescue had lasted fewer than 15 minutes—the couple were uncertain how long they'd been in the water before Paul arrived.

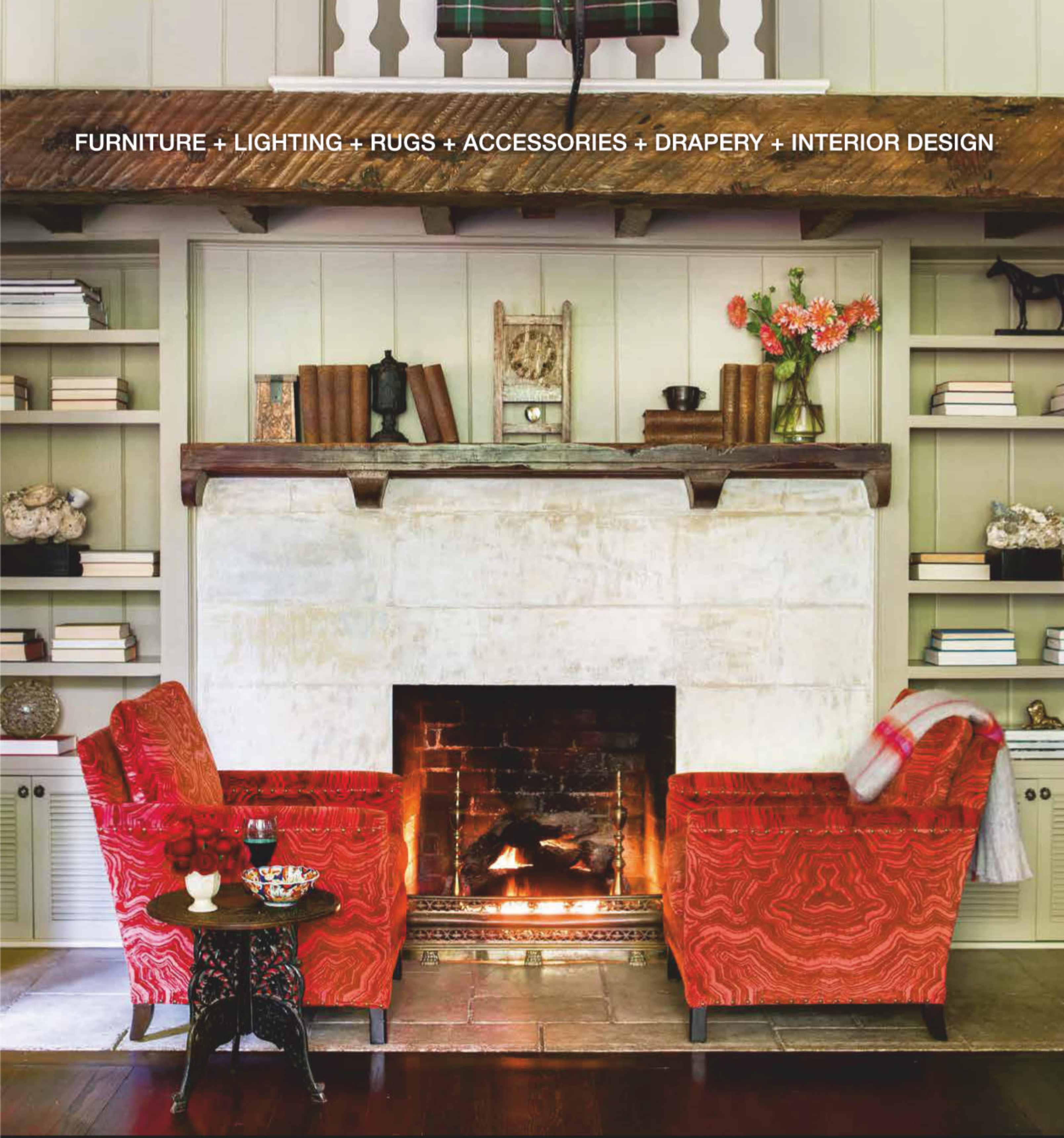
But by the time they reached the north shore, the rescue was still underway. The couple didn't know where their friends were and there was confusion about the exact location of their rental cabin. Fortunately, a helpful neighbor opened her home to the wet, cold and exhausted survivors and called for an ambulance. When it arrived and the EMT assessed the body temperatures of the couple, each registered 80 degrees, indicating severe hypothermia.

As the ambulance departed towards Gloversville, Paul contacted his sister and brother-in-law, who soon arrived with a "rescue recovery plan": hot coffee, blankets and bear hugs.

Paul called his wife, had help returning the borrowed canoe to its storage location, and then slowly began to process just how close he had come to losing his life that day. There was no choice other than to try to save those people.

A couple of days later, the young man and woman—both college students who had planned a weekend getaway at a charming cabin on a lake in the Adirondacks—came to visit Paul to thank him for saving their lives. They said their canoe had capsized when the woman had reached out to grab a plastic snack bag that had fallen into the lake. They were both experienced swimmers, but the extremely cold, deep water presented a crisis that could have had fatal consequences. If Paul hadn't walked out of his camp with his cup of coffee at that precise moment, they would not have survived.

Martha Price, Professor Emerita and Dean of Early Childhood at SUNY Cobleskill, has a summer camp on East Caroga Lake.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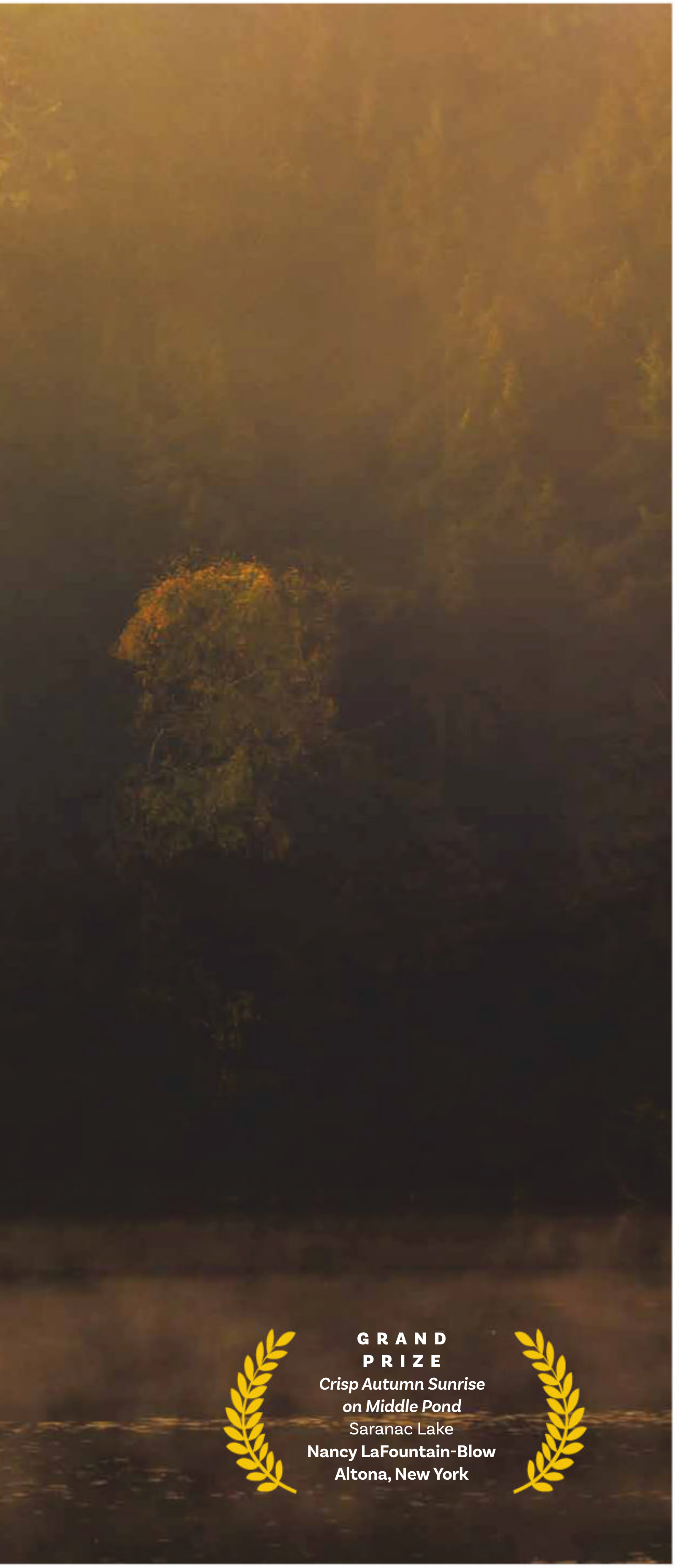


GRAND PRIZE
Crisp Autumn Sunrise on Middle Pond
Saranac Lake
Nancy LaFountain-Blow
Altona, New York

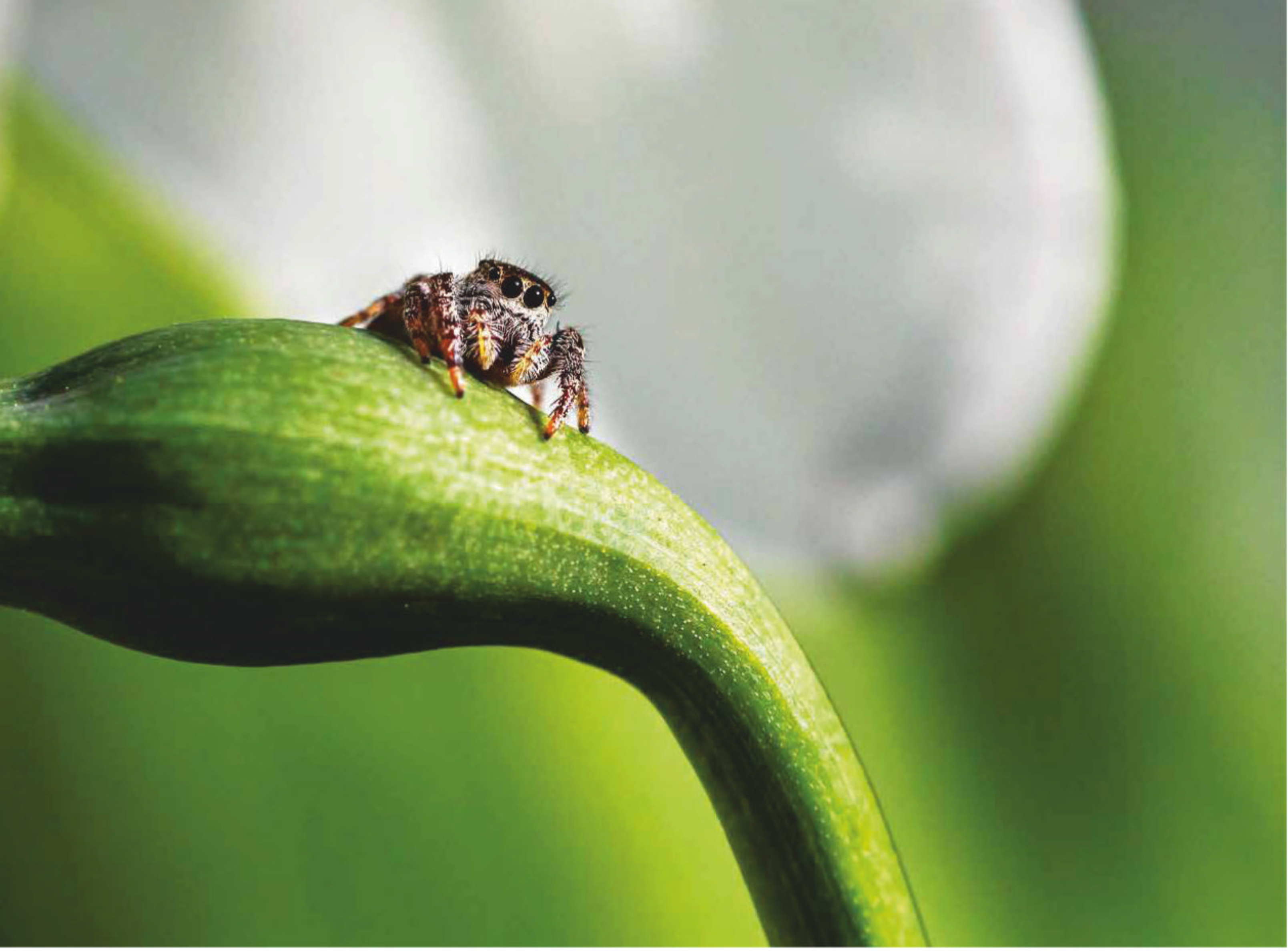
WINNERS
OF OUR ANNUAL
PHOTOGRAPHY
CONTEST
★

Shooting Stars

THE BEST PART OF THE PHOTO CONTEST? Getting a chance to see the park—and its people and critters—through a whole new set of lenses. This year we wanted to share the fun, so we invited Manuel Palacios, of Zone 3 Photography, to join in as a guest judge. He gravitated toward his grand-prize pick right away, noting that Nancy LaFountain-Blow's *Crisp Autumn Sunrise on Middle Pond* "portrays a calm, fleeting moment in nature, inviting a sense of quiet reflection. Its warm, gentle lighting and simple, balanced composition are both technically sound and emotionally resonant."

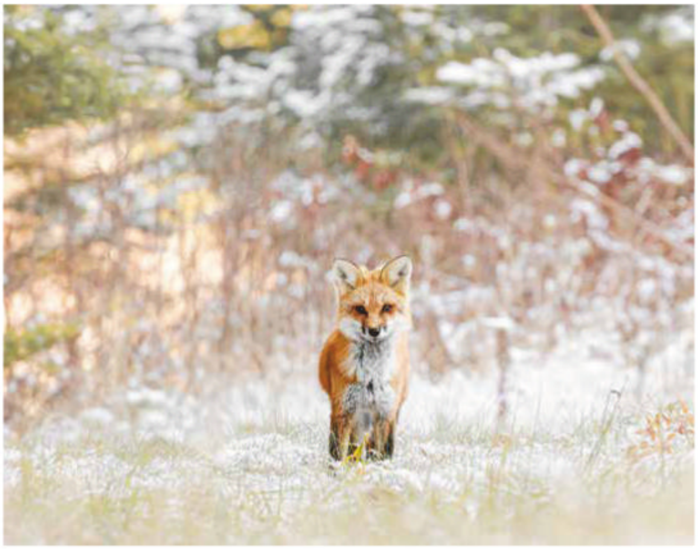
He explains that his top picks were those "that evoke a clear sense of emotion or atmosphere," such as Janet Thomas's *Whispers of the Forest*: "Each step draws you deeper into a secret, sylvan world. … This is storytelling at its best—imagery that invites the viewer into a narrative unfolding just beyond the frame. Also, the shot of the tiny spider perched on a gently curving leaf [Jessica Chevalier's *Jumper*] is elevated by its soft, somewhat abstract background, which perfectly highlights the spider's delicate details. Macro photography is both technically demanding and artistically rewarding, transforming something small and easily overlooked into a moment of wonder."

Congratulations to all of our winners. Grand-prize and first- through third-place honorees will receive a commemorative piece of pottery by Sue Young, of Jay. The winning photographs and additional honorable mentions will be posted on www.adirondacklife.com beginning March 1.



FIRST PLACE
Jumper
Crown Point
Jessica Chevalier
Crown Point, New York

WILDLIFE

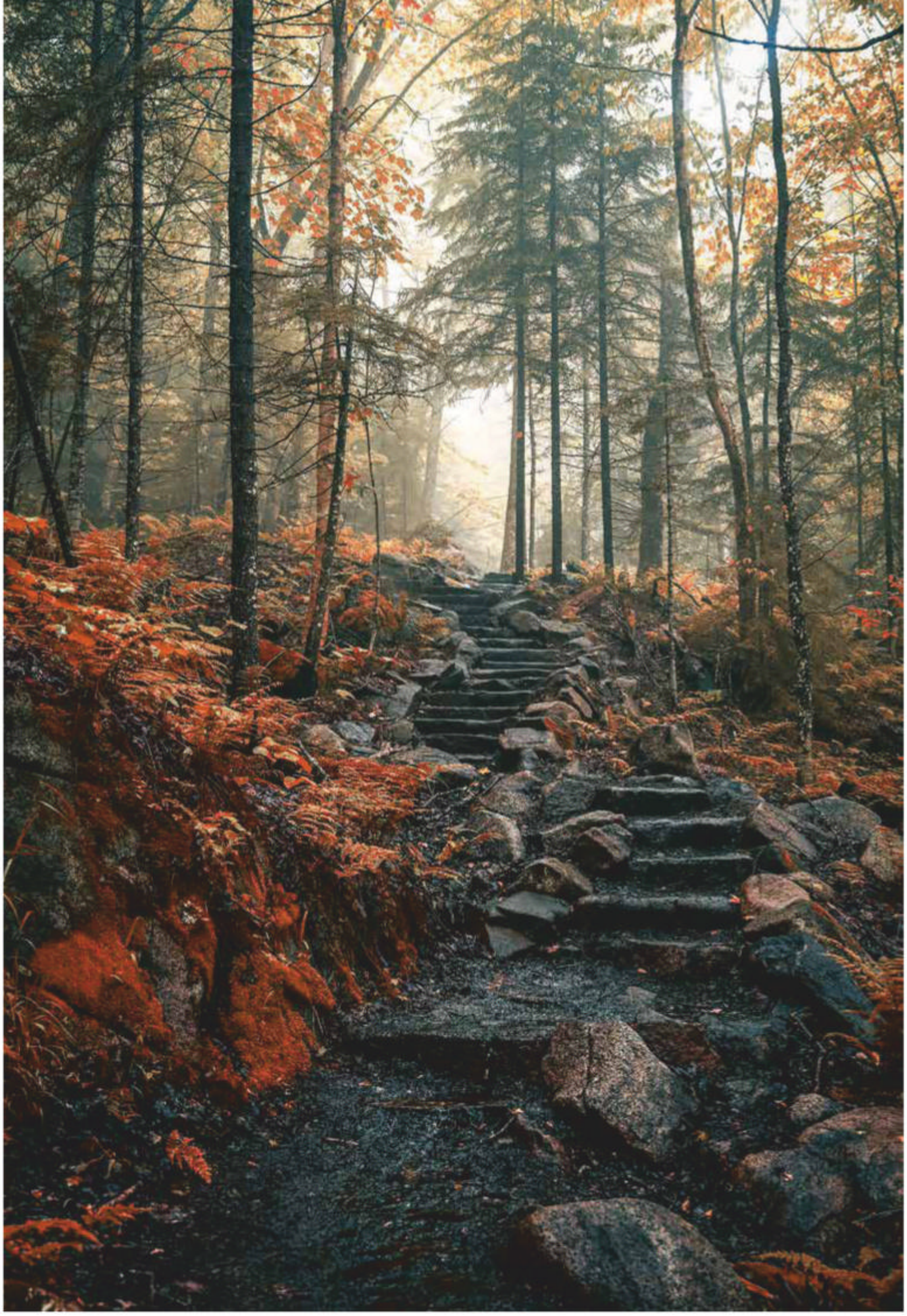


HONORABLE MENTION
Fox in a Winter Wonderland
North Elba
Miguel Engelhardt
Plattsburgh, New York

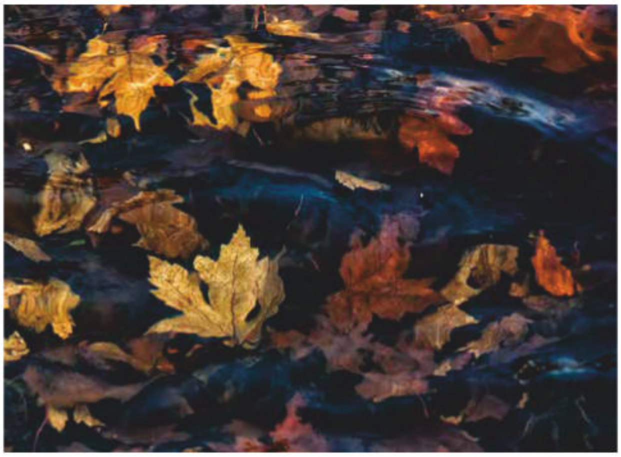
SECOND PLACE
Back to the Nest
Loon Lake
Tom Thorson
Chestertown, New York

THIRD PLACE
Snow Bird
Lewis
Steff Obkirchner
Ray Brook, New York

LANDSCAPE

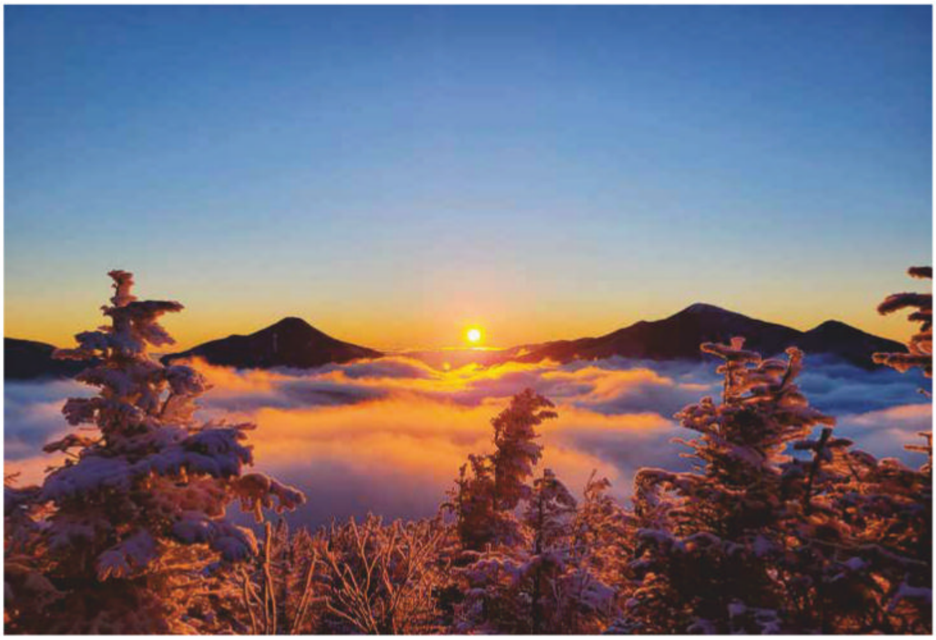


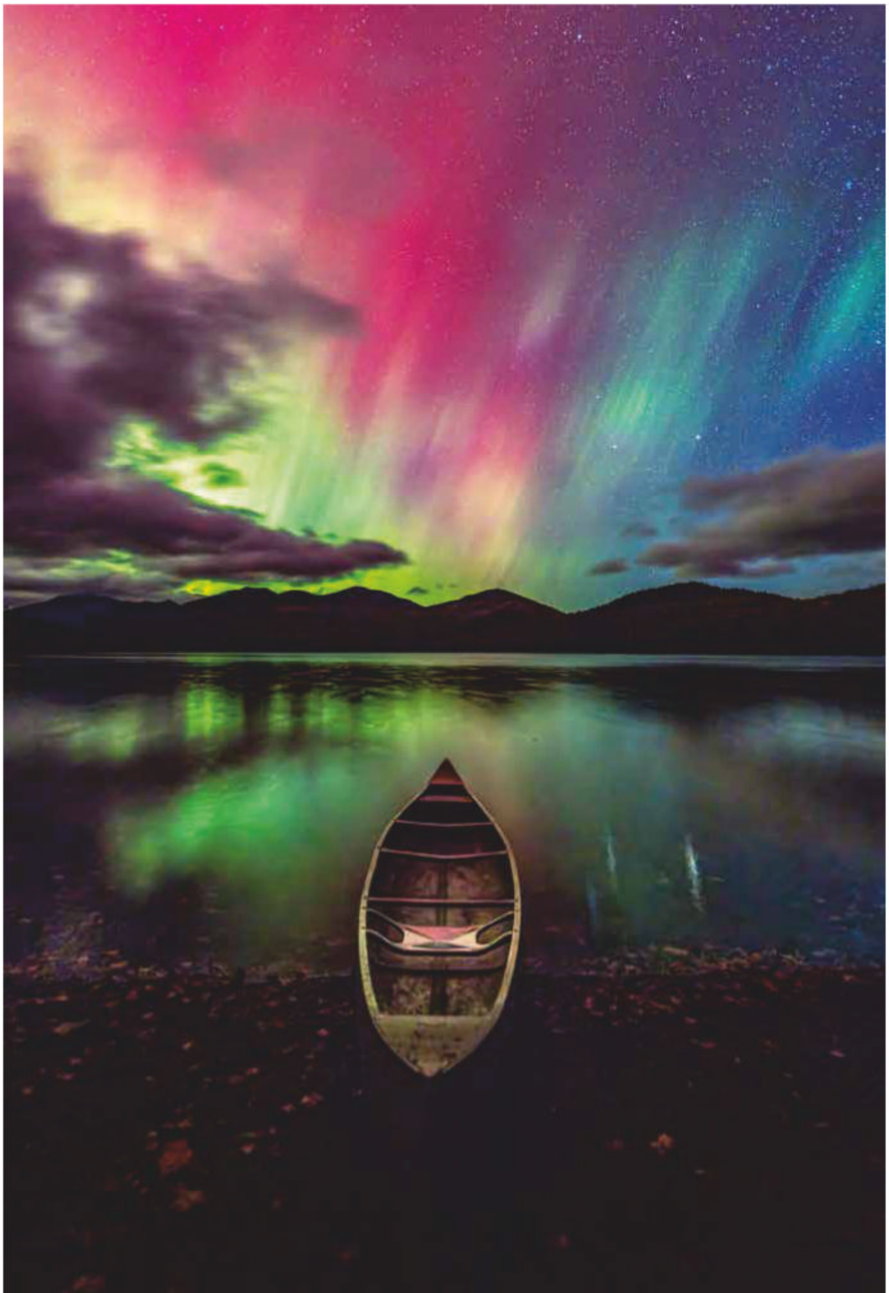
FIRST PLACE
Whispers of the Forest
Mount Van Hoevenberg
Janet Thomas
Lake Placid, New York



HONORABLE MENTION
Water Ballet
Limekiln Lake
Diana Whiting
Skaneateles, New York

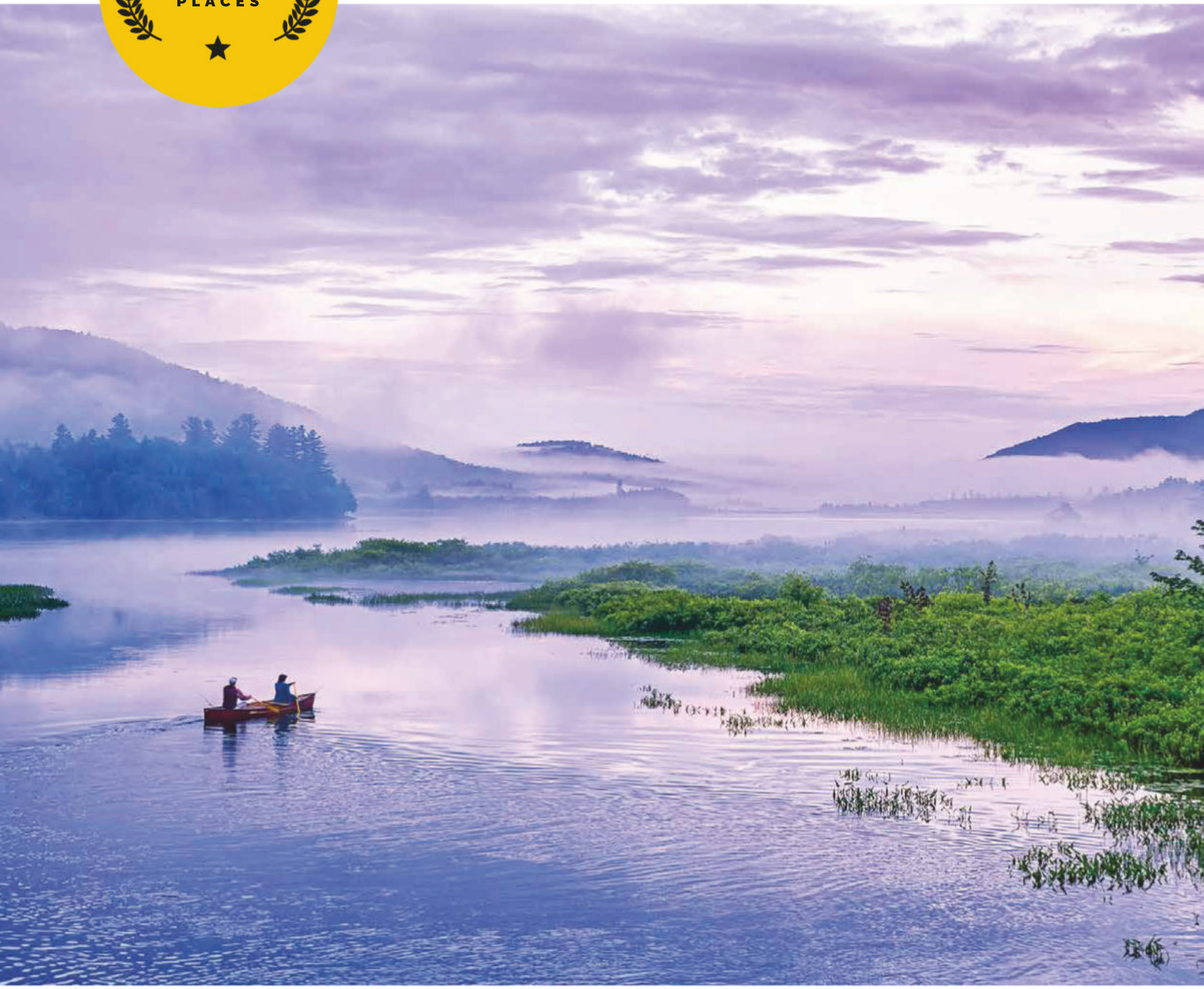
THIRD PLACE
New Year's View
from Phelps Mountain
Geoffrey Hartpence
Ballston Lake, New York



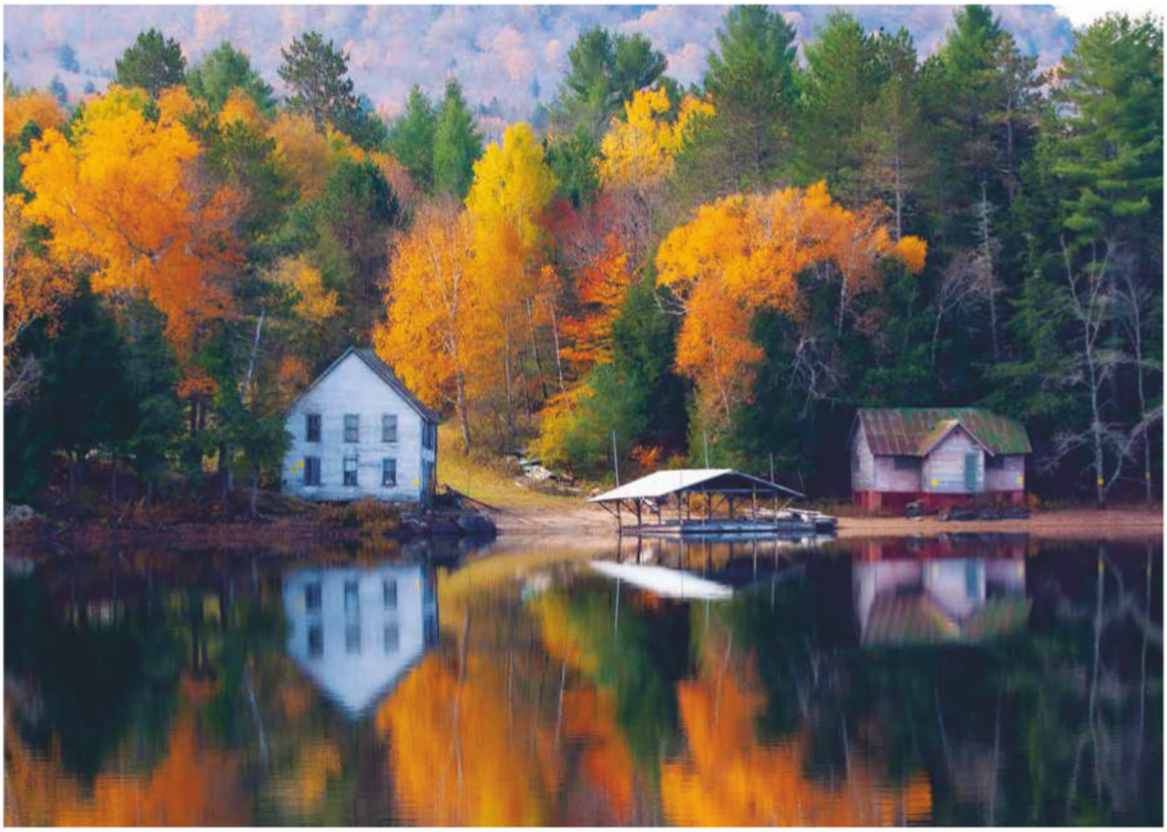


SECOND PLACE
Aurora over Clear Pond
North Hudson
William Adamczak
Bolton Landing, New York

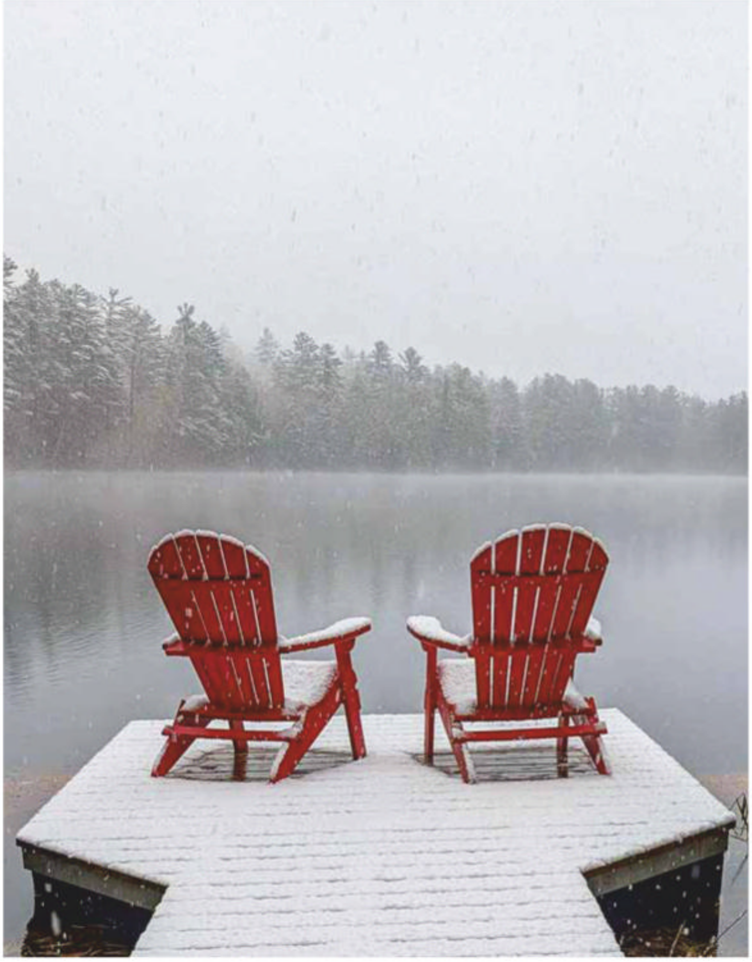
PEOPLE & PLACES



FIRST PLACE
Into the Lavender Haze
Lewey Lake
Christopher Battles
Indian Lake, New York



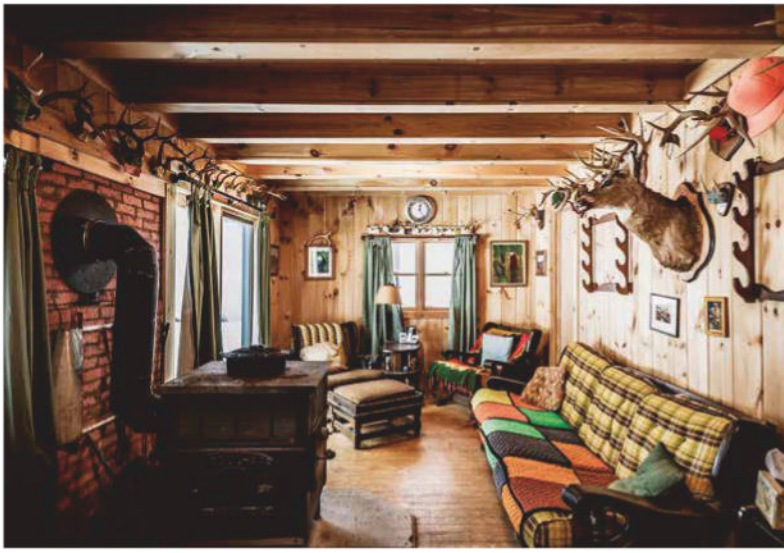
SECOND PLACE
Perfect Fall Day
Long Lake
Christine Festin
Clifton Park, New York



THIRD PLACE
First Snow
Ray Brook
Steff Obkirchner
Ray Brook, New York

Warm Thoughts

PHOTOGRAPHS
BY CARRIE
MARIE BURR



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: **Woodstoves in Clemson, Lassellsville, Keene and North River.**

Woodstoves are the heart of home

MY FIRST ADIRONDACK HOME was a boxy farmhouse built just after the Civil War, where rooms were added as kids multiplied and as plumbing moved inside. By the time we lived there, more than 20 years ago, the wooden floors were a jumble of various-sized planks and if you dropped a marble it would roll to a sagging corner. Exposed beams made up the low ceilings and our front door was a piece of plywood until, in a Vermont barn, we found a “coffin door” to fit the space—in the 19th century some entryways were extra wide for home funeral services.

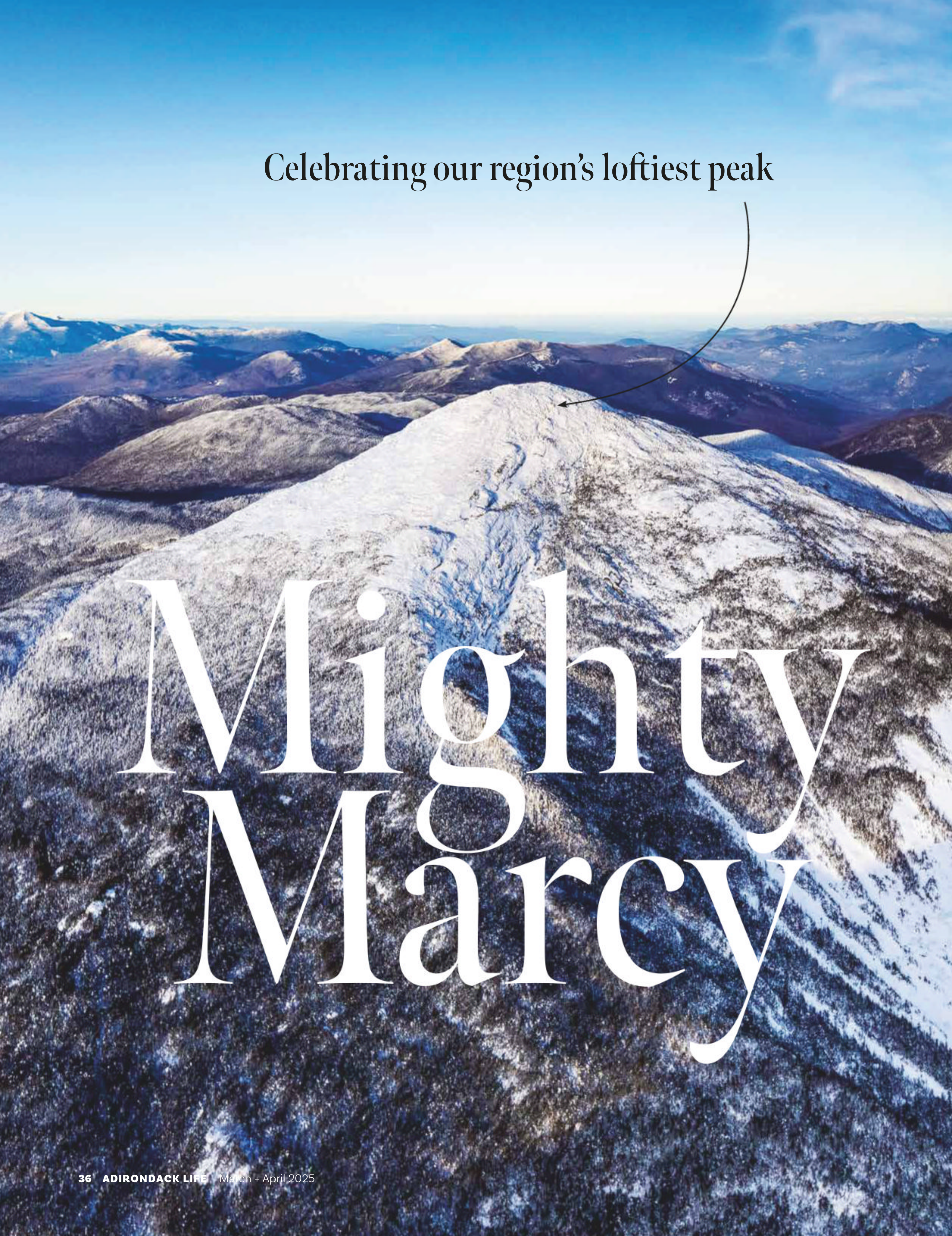
The house had leaky windows and cold air drifted through spaces in the floorboards. It also had a massive cast-iron woodstove that, when fed through the night, turned our upstairs bedroom into an inferno. The stove burned fast and hot and cooled on a dime. It was always hungry, so heating our home was an exercise in endurance, a constant activity that sometimes led to profanity and daydreams of moving to a tropical place.

We eventually replaced that stove with one half its size, equipped with a catalytic converter. It burned efficiently and reduced the smoke and dust that settled on every surface.

Despite my complaining, that early—and later—woodstove gave me some sweet memories. I’d sit by the stove and hold my kids, back then babies. Around it we’d dry our hair, hang wet mittens, arrange soggy socks and soaked boots. There was always a pot of water on its top, releasing steam that, maybe even just a little, humidified the dry winter air. By the stove my husband and I made hard decisions, we dreamed of the future and we talked about mundane stuff, like what’s for dinner or if the dog had been walked.

Utilitarian, intimate, messy—you can learn a lot about people by hanging by their woodstoves. Which is why I love the shots, shown here, by Huletts Landing–based photographer Carrie Marie Burr. From Clemson to Keene and beyond, Burr captures true Adirondack life.

—Annie Stoltie



Celebrating our region's loftiest peak

Mighty Marcy

MOUNT MARCY is New York's Everest, an ancient bedrock dome more than three and a half Empire State Buildings tall. This peak—the highest in the Adirondacks—has figured big in the human imagination, from paintings and poems to the impulse to conquer it. Marcy's become a place for triumph, peace, love, close calls, even death.

There's the rock itself: deep down, a hot spot in the Earth's crust continues to push the peak farther into the sky, each year about the length of Lincoln's nose on a penny. Some texts say indigenous people called the mountain and its neighboring peaks *Wawobadenik*, Abenaki for "it is always white." But then, in 1837, the year Martin Van Buren became president, the mountain was named for Governor William Learned Marcy. Back then Marcy was a beloved figured, serving three terms as governor of New York State, in the cabinets of the Pierce and Polk administrations, and as a Supreme Court Justice. He'd been the one to commission an early survey of the Adiron-

dack backcountry.

Today hikers include Mount Marcy in their circuit of summiting the region's 46 highest peaks. Some race to see how fast they can scale it; others record how many times they've climbed it. Adventurers continue to chart fresh ways to experience it, via slides or whatever patch of mountain has yet to be touched.

Views of Marcy can be had from all over the region. From a distance, it looms above its neighboring peaks, all part of the Canadian Shield that dips down from the Great White North. From the sky, Marcy is among what appears a cushioned swath left over from polishing glaciers, so unlike the younger, angular mountains out West.

There's plenty to say about Marcy—books are dedicated to its history, more than a century of hiking guides offer ways to ascend it, and advocates toil to protect it. What follows in these pages barely scratches the anorthosite, but it's our way of celebrating the Adirondacks' loftiest peak, a mighty mountain that deserves respect.

—Annie Stoltie

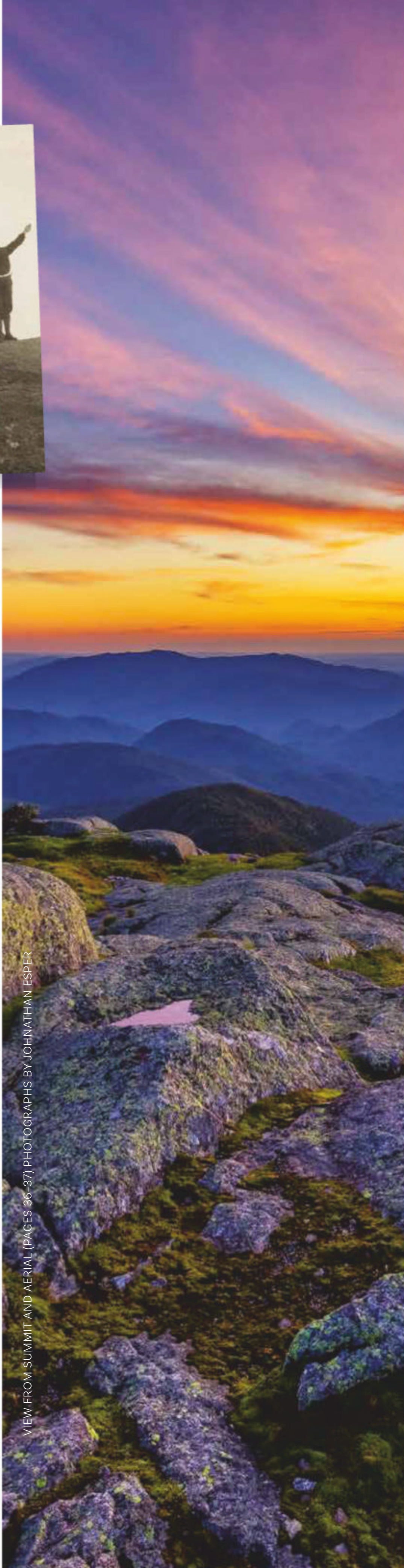
Marcy through the Years

BY TONY GOODWIN

UP UNTIL 1836, first Slide Mountain in the Catskills and then Whiteface Mountain were considered to be the highest mountain in New York. In that year, a sighting from above Lake Colden revealed that Marcy was the highest peak in the state.

Marcy was first climbed the next year, 1837, a full 195 years after the first ascent of Mount Washington in New Hampshire. As of the year of Marcy's first ascent, there was already a bridle path up Mount Washington. By the time guide Old Mountain Phelps had cut the first crude trail up Marcy in 1861, there was a carriage road to the summit of Mount Washington to serve the two hotels located there. And construction had already started on the cog railway that was finished in 1869.

An English adventure writer of that era, Charles Fenno Hoffman, learned of the "discovery" of a previously unknown high mountain in the nation's most populous state.



VIEW FROM SUMMIT AND AERIAL (PAGES 36-37) PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHNATHAN ESPER

High Peaks view from Mount Marcy's summit.

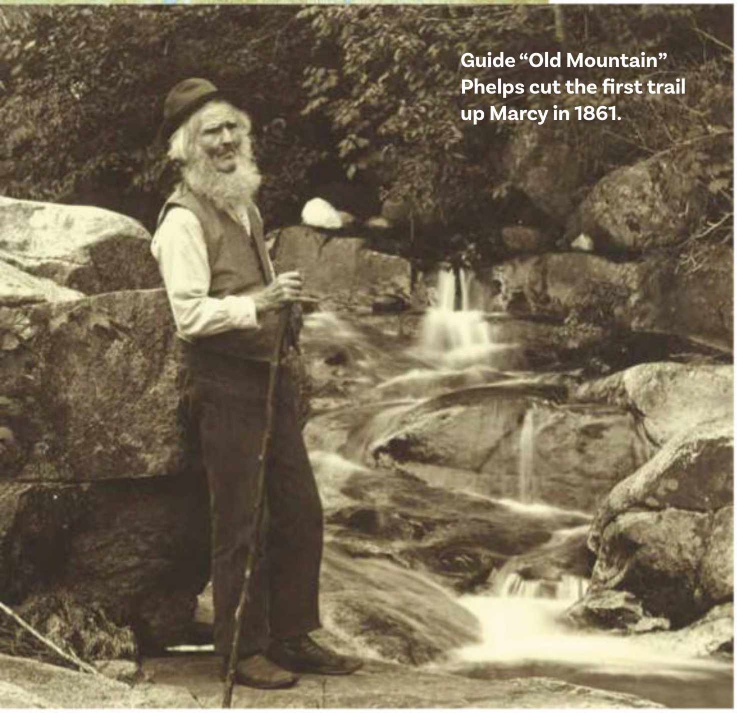
A month after the first ascent, Hoffman traveled to the region and attempted to climb the peak despite being disabled by an amputated leg. He failed in his attempt, but successfully applied the Native American name "Tahawus"— translated as "Cloud-Splitter"—to the peak. Hoffman's suggested name came from the language of the Seneca tribe that inhabited the Genesee Valley and would never have even seen the peak.

Ebeneezer Emmons's barometric measurements on the first ascent proved that Marcy was more than 5,000 feet high. Two years after Emmons's ascent and height measurement, Farrand Benedict, a professor of Mathematics and Civil Engineering at the University of Vermont, made barometric observations on the summit over the course of four hours and came up with an elevation of 5,344.69 feet—less than a foot different than Verplanck Colvin's later measurement. Benedict also traveled widely in other parts of the Adirondacks. A few years after his Marcy observations, he proposed building a 30-foot-high dam at the outlet of Long Lake to divert the waters of the Raquette River into the Hudson watershed and thus improve waterpower on that then more developed river. The water would have flowed south of Plumley Point and into Round Pond and Catlin Lake, which drains into the Hudson at Harris Lake. Interests in St. Lawrence County, however, easily managed to stop that plan. (I can only imagine the Environmental Impact Statement for that project.)

The youngest person who ever guided a party to the summit was my father, Jim Goodwin, who in 1922, at age 12, led a party up Marcy just three years after his first ascent in 1919. Jim Goodwin may also be the oldest, or one of the oldest, hikers to reach summit. He climbed Marcy in 1995 at age 85, accompanied by five grandchildren.

IF YOU GO

Adirondack Mountain Club's HIGH PEAKS TRAILS (15th edition), by Tony Goodwin, is the go-to guidebook for hiking Mount Marcy. Learn more about the High Peaks Wilderness Complex, including rules and regulations, at dec.ny.gov/places/high-peaks-wilderness-complex.



Guide “Old Mountain” Phelps cut the first trail up Marcy in 1861.

A Road up Marcy?

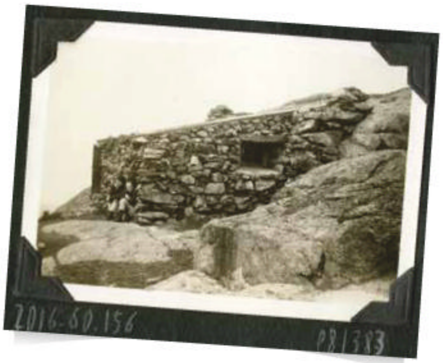
IN 1872, ORSON SCHOFIELD “Old Mountain” Phelps actually proposed that a road be built up Marcy. This proposal was in an article that Phelps wrote for a November 1872 issue of the *Essex County Republican*. In that article, Phelps first noted that visitors to Keene Valley the previous summer had helped the local economy by spending more than $9,000. Phelps then speculated how much more would be spent if Marcy had a road like Mount Washington. He claimed that the White Mountains, with “no better natural inducements” took in $2 million. Phelps often referred to Marcy as “Mercy,” and that road was never built.

In the same article, Phelps takes some credit for the sudden influx of tourists because he guided an artist, Frederick Perkins, up Marcy in 1858. Phelps claimed that Perkins’s sketches and paintings brought more artists to Keene Valley, and that it was these paintings that made people aware of the beauty of the area.

Climbing Parties

THERE WAS A RADIO BROADCAST atop Marcy during the first ascent’s centennial, in 1937 (shown below). But there was also a quieter commemoration in 1987 of the sesquicentennial of that climb. Guy Waterman organized a group that climbed the peak via the original ascent route along the uppermost reaches of the Opalescent River. On the summit, Guy’s group encountered members of a Boy Scout group who were dressed in period garb and had assumed the personae of the members of the ascent party.

There was also a group from the Adirondack Trail Improvement Society that made the climb from Upper Ausable Lake. This group included one member who had made the climb in 1937 for the centennial. The 1937 climb had been led by Alice Johannsen, daughter of Herman “Jackrabbit” Johannsen, for whom the Jackrabbit Trail, from Keene to Paul Smiths, was named.



Gimme Shelter

This stone shelter on the summit of Marcy was built in 1928 as a safe haven, though opponents argued that its existence attracted more—and less prepared—hikers. It was removed in 1967.

PETE FISH AND LAKE TEAR OF THE CLOUDS PHOTOGRAPHS BY NANCIE BATTAGLIA. CENTENNIAL, SHELTER, PHELPS AND CLIMBERS ON MARCY (PAGE 38) PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE ADIRONDACK EXPERIENCE

A Master's in Marcy

AS OF EARLY APRIL 2012, Peter Fish, of Keene, had hiked 5,344-foot Mount Marcy 763 times. At the time, the 76-year-old retired forest ranger, still a High Peaks fixture after working there from 1975 to 1998, chatted about how to appreciate this place.

Q: Why go up Mount Marcy so many times?
A: I keep forgetting I've been there.

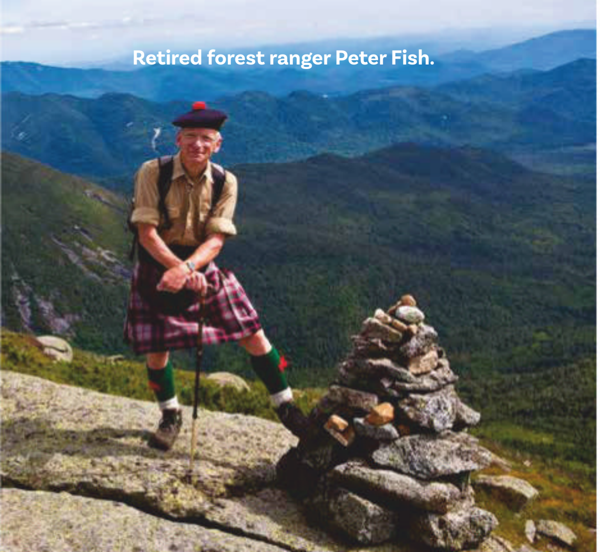
Q: What did Tropical Storm Irene [2011] do to Marcy?
A: Unkind things. She tore the hell out of the trail in the Marcy Dam vicinity. I wouldn't have allowed that kind of crap when I was a ranger. She wouldn't have been allowed in—Floyd either.

Q: Do you really hike with Scotch?
A: I normally carry two 50-milliliter bottles of Scotch—Laphroaig if I'm feeling classy. Just enough to warm the interior and give a minor attitude adjustment.

Q: What's the best material to hike in?
A: Wool is still the best. As stupid as sheep are, they know how to dress appropriately.

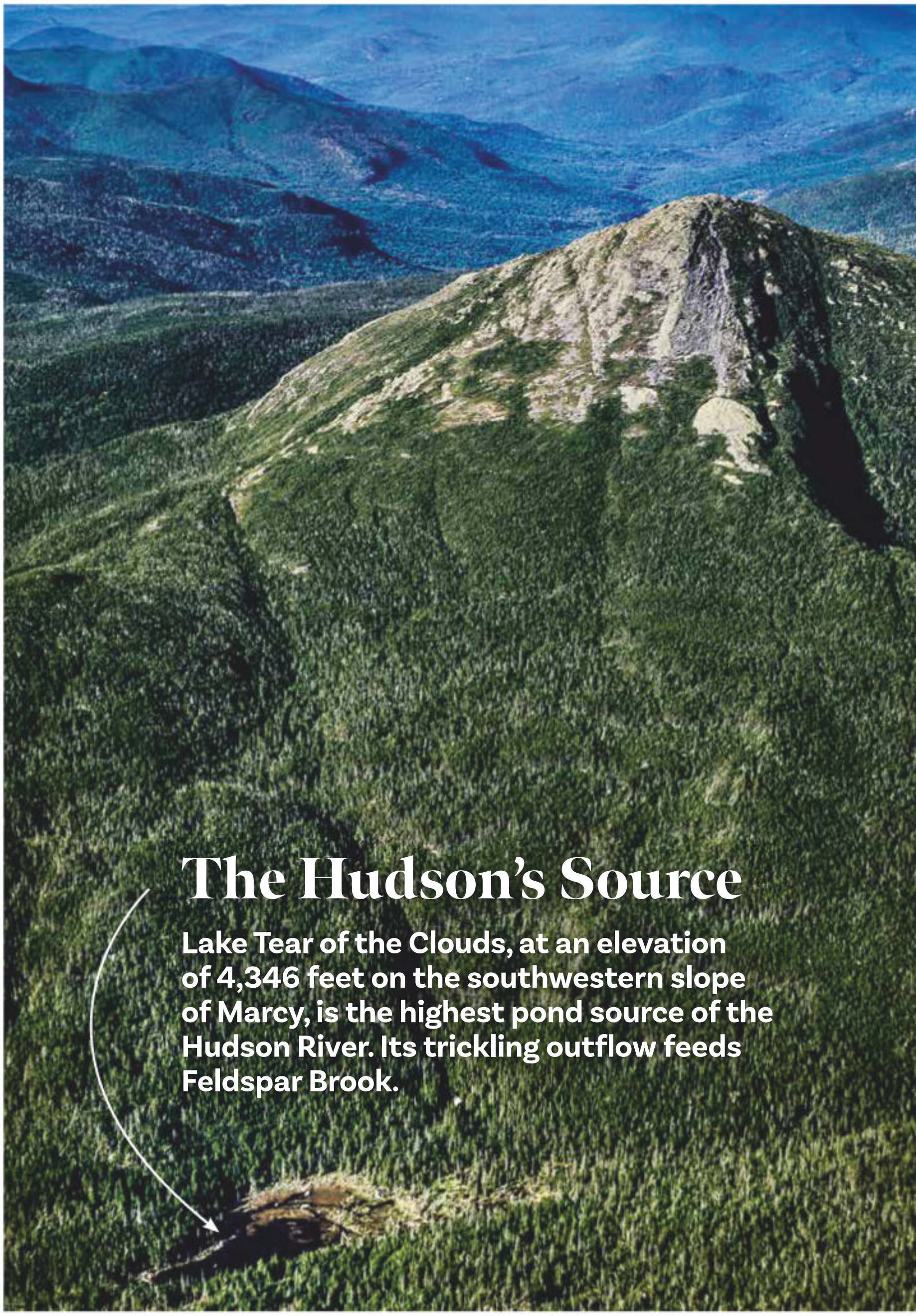
Q: What kind of mistakes do you see on Marcy?
A: I've met people up there who are just carrying a camera. I don't know how they're going to crawl in there if it gets windy. And hooded sweatshirts are cheap and expendable—they make a person expendable too.

—*Excerpted from "Highlander,"*
2012 Guide to the Great Outdoors.



Retired forest ranger Peter Fish.

The Garden Parking Lot at the start of the Keene Valley approach to Mount Marcy has that name because in the early 20th century it was an actual garden. The owner of the last property on Johns Brook Lane, Arthur Wells, planted that garden but apparently never had much success because the deer kept getting in. Wells then built a small stage where his daughter, an aspiring actress, could put on little plays.



The Hudson's Source

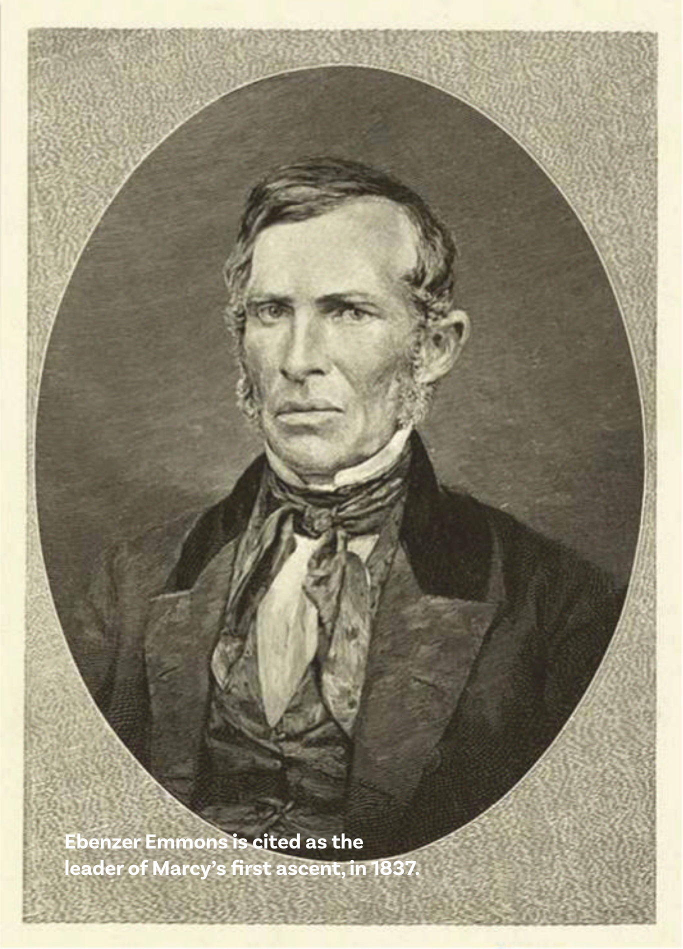
Lake Tear of the Clouds, at an elevation of 4,346 feet on the southwestern slope of Marcy, is the highest pond source of the Hudson River. Its trickling outflow feeds Feldspar Brook.

Groundbreakers

BY THOMAS WELCH

PLACED BY THE ADIRONDACK MOUNTAIN CLUB and the New York State Conservation Department on the 1937 centenary of the first ascent, the bronze plaque on Marcy's summit names 15 in the first climbing party. Setting aside a few historical hiccups (the mountain was not "also known by the Indian name Tahawus" and a few of the named climbers were not part of the group), the sign recognizes a little-appreciated event in the history of science.

Many of the names are known to anyone familiar with Adirondack history: Henderson, Cheney, Holt, MacIntyre, for example. Most of the others are hardly household names, although two—Redfield and Emmons—are recognized as Adirondack 46s. But the party that set foot on Mount Marcy on August 5, 1837, may have been the most distinguished assemblage of American scientists in the 19th century—being on the first ascent of Mount Marcy is barely a footnote in many of their impressive careers.



Ebenzer Emmons is cited as the leader of Marcy's first ascent, in 1837.

EMMONS PHOTOGRAPH FROM THE MIRIAM AND IRA D. WALLACH DIVISION OF ART, PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS: PRINT COLLECTION, THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY. DIAPENSIA PHOTOGRAPH BY BRENDAN WILTSE

GEOLOGIST

Ebenezer Emmons

(1799–1863)

Emmons's name appears first on the plaque, often cited as the expedition leader. He is identified as "state geologist" from "Williams [College]." While this is accurate, it understates his background and career. He received his undergraduate degree from Williams College and an MD from Berkshire Medical College. He practiced medicine in Massachusetts, but also dabbled in geology, his first love. After a few years he resumed his education, joining the first class at the Rensselaer School (now RPI) to focus on geology. His most important mentor there was Professor Amos Eaton.

At the time of the Marcy ascent, Emmons was professor of chemistry and geology at Williams, and professor of obstetrics at Albany Medical College. At the time he was also chief geologist of the northern district of New York, and his reports in this role discussed his scientific findings on the expedition. He is generally credited with being first to use the term "Adirondacks" to refer to our mountains.

Emmons's career as a geologist flourished after the 1837 expedition, and he made several major contributions to the field. All came to a sad ending, however. One of his students, James Hall, accompanied him on the Marcy ascent. Hall ultimately eclipsed his mentor in geologic fame, and the two of them descended into an ugly public dispute over the age of a rock group, the Taconic System. Ultimately, the dispute, dubbed the "Great Taconic Controversy," led to lawsuits and countersuits, and resulted in Emmons being barred from practicing geology in New York. He began another career phase as state geologist of North Carolina, where he died trapped in the state by the Civil War. His body was returned to New York, and is interred next to that of his student, nemesis and expedition colleague, James Hall.

METEOROLOGIST

William Redfield

(1789–1857)

Clearly the most senior of the scientists on the expedition, Redfield authored the definitive scientific report of the climb in the *American Journal of Science and Arts*. He had no formal education after grammar school and was largely self-taught.

Redfield's reputation as a scientist had been established earlier with major discoveries about the nature of Atlantic storms and hurricanes. From a series of careful observations (such as the pattern of tree fall), he deduced the counterclockwise rotation of hurricanes. He described the familiar path of Atlantic storms from the Caribbean up the coast to the northeast. Early 19th-century nautical guides credited his work with allowing sailors to predict storms and minimize their impact.

Much of Redfield's work involved barometers. He is credited with a number of barometric designs and modifications and popularized their use for the study of weather. His measurements during the expedition demonstrated for the first time that the Adirondacks were higher than the Catskills; Emmons later used the data to develop mathematical models for determining altitude. Their conclusions about the height of Mount Marcy hold today.

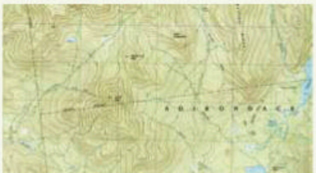
Red-

| *Continued on page 54*

Lost on Marcy

April 12, 1976, 19-year-old Steve Thomas made a cup of Darjeeling tea at a lean-to on the trail to Mount Marcy, told his hiking party he was taking a walk, then vanished. Thomas's brother, Bob, climbed Marcy hundreds of times looking for Steve. On one of those searches he helped discover the remains of George "Buddy" Atkinson in Panther Gorge. But he never found his brother.

Atkinson, a 20-year-old from western Massachusetts disappeared on March 15, 1973. The day he arrived in the Adirondacks he called home to say he'd gotten there safely, parked his dad's aging Lincoln Continental at the Adirondak Loj, signed the Van Hoevenberg trailhead register, and then he was gone. Atkinson's sister, Pat Atkinson-Sirois, says that when her brother set off all those years ago, he was mourning the recent loss of his mother, working an unsatisfying job in his hometown and dreaming of attending college out West. But, she says, "If I have to take some solace in this whole thing, it's that he lost his life in a place he absolutely loved."



ADIRONDACK
PARK

High Life

THE SUMMIT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM—a partnership between the Adirondack Mountain Club, the Adirondack Chapter of the Nature Conservancy, and the Department of Environmental Conservation—was founded in 1989 to educate the public about vulnerable alpine ecosystems and perform vital research.

According to Summit Steward Coordinator Liam Ebner, stewards educated a daily average of 72 hikers per day on Marcy in July and August 2024. We asked him for a few high points of New York's highest point. The following has been edited for space.

What are some of the protected alpine species that grow on Marcy?

Marcy is home to the largest acreage of alpine habitat in New York State, as well as a large diversity of rare, threatened or endangered alpine plants, including:

•Diapensia (*Diapensia lapponica*): Diapensia's pincushion adaptation allows it to handle harsh weather by retaining heat. If you stuck a thermometer into the center of the plant, it would be 15 degrees warmer than the outside air.

•Boott's rattlesnake root (*Nabalus boottii*): Boott's only grows on the alpine summits of the Northeastern U.S., and nowhere else in the world.

•Lapland rosebay (*Rhododendron lapponicum*): Lapland rosebay is a true arctic tundra species with an incredibly slow growth rate. The rosebay shrubs on the summits may look tiny but could be hundreds of years old.

•Dwarf willow (*Salix herbacea*): Dwarf willow only grows on Marcy and Algonquin in New York and is extremely small. Thankfully, both populations are far from trails and appear to be safe from trampling.

•Deer's hair sedge (*Tricophorum cespitosum*): Sedges look like grasses and they prefer wet and boggy environments, like the High Peak summits. These plants are some of the most common on the summits, waving through the wind on open meadows. In the fall, they turn a deep golden color.

•Fernald's blue grass (*Poa fernaldiana ssp. laxa*): Fernald's blue grass grows only on Marcy in New York—just 10 tufts of it survive near the summit.

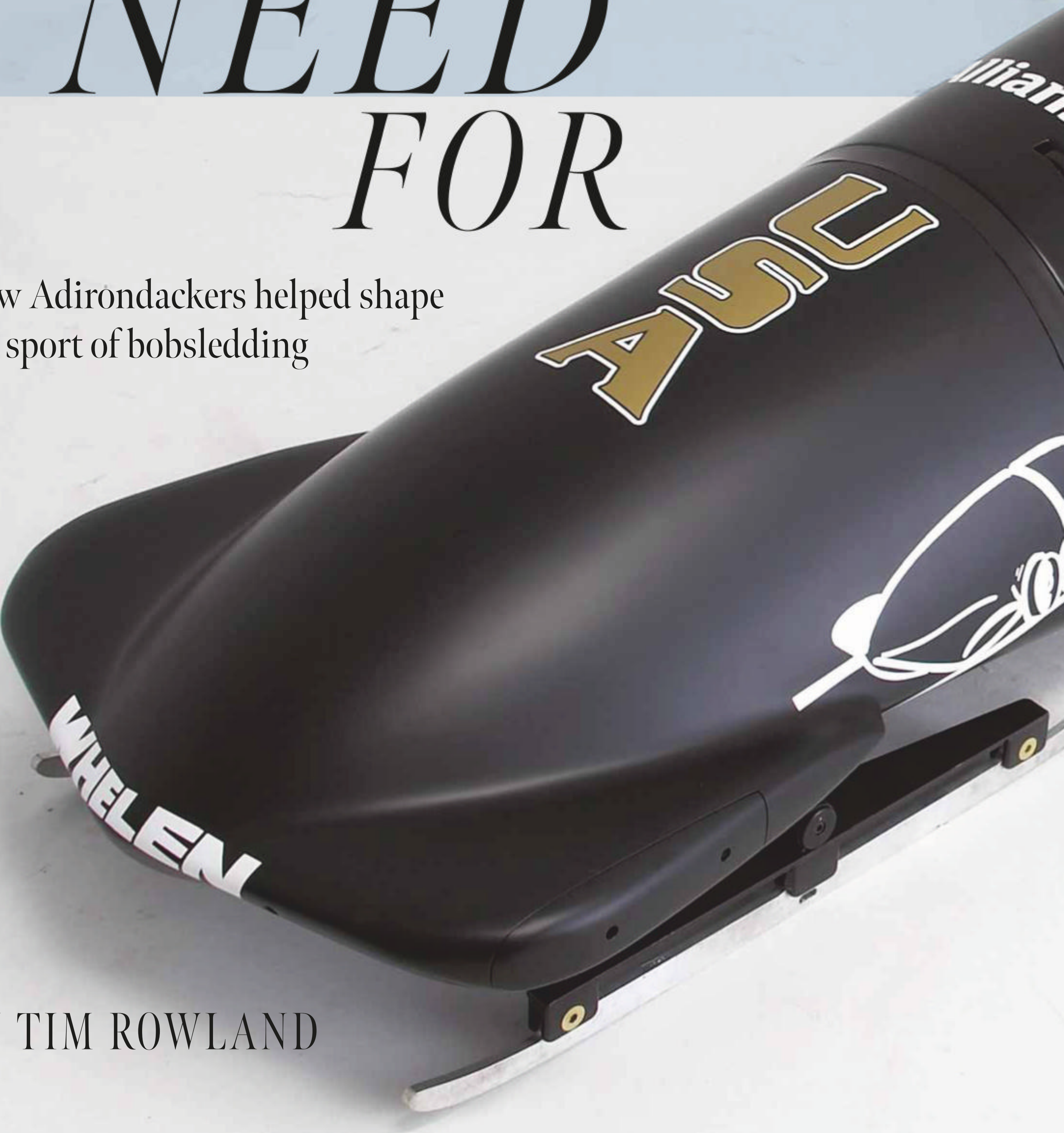
Why are these plants so important?

The alpine summits of the Adirondack High Peaks are at the southern limit in the region of alpine ecosystems. Some of these plant | *Continued on page 60*

Diapensia, a protected alpine species.

THE NEED FOR

How Adirondackers helped shape the sport of bobsledding



BY TIM ROWLAND

The Night Train
Team HOLCOMB
BELL

SPEED

IN A NONDESCRIPT MAINTENANCE SHOP at the Olympic Sports Complex outside Lake Placid sits a piece of felinesque art seemingly ready to spring from the workbench and plunge into the alabaster snows at speeds that would flash-freeze a human heart. Which one day it assuredly will do.

This, a modern bobsled in the making, is the work of the great Marc van den Berg, an international engineering savant who is now building the next generation of sleds for the U.S.A.

“The new sled he’s building is beyond space-age,” said Bryan Berghorn, bobsled driver and sliding sports operations manager for the Olympic Regional Development Authority. “His level of craftsmanship can make a huge difference.”

From the day the first wooden sleds shook, rattled and in some cases quite literally rolled down the suicide course known as the Mount Van Hoevenberg Bobsleigh Run, daredevil teams have turned to technology to shave an eyelash of time in a sport where a second might as well be a week. And with van den Berg in house, bobsledding partisans hope Lake Placid can once again make its mark on the sport, as it did in the mid-20th century, and again in the early 2000s.

Bobsledding became an Olympic sport in 1924, and a decade later 1932 gold medalist Hubert Stevens, a Lake Placid hotelier and highway commissioner, ignited a bobsledding arms race when he approached Bob Linney, a 27-year-old metallurgist at Republic Steel in Lyon Mountain, asking for a little more speed out of his sled.

Linney, who knew nothing about bobsleds but plenty about math, cooked up an all-metal sled with slipperier runners and a lower center of gravity that scorched the standing track record by an unthinkable eight seconds. Linney named the sled Ironshoes.

"It was one of the most revolutionary advancements in sled technology," said John Morgan, Lake Placid bobsledding promoter and television broadcaster.

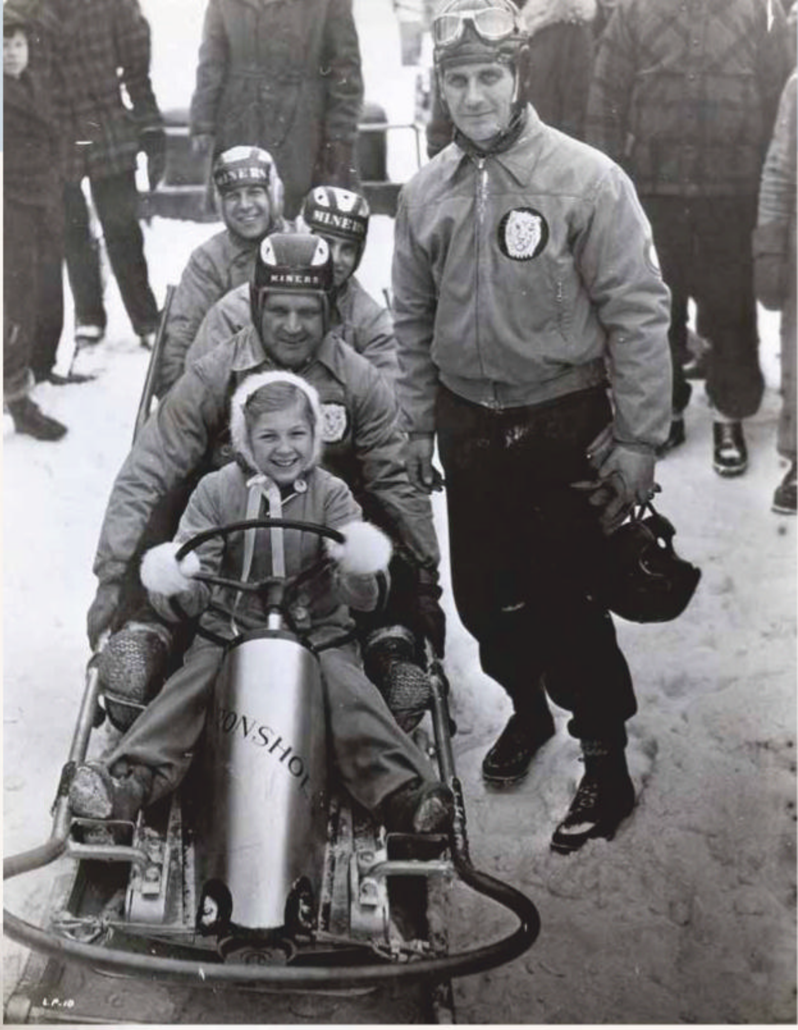
Twenty years later, Arthur Tyler, an engineer for Eastman Kodak in Rochester, medaled in the 1956 Olympics with a design that included a sleek cowling to reduce wind resistance and an articulation joint (not unlike the joint in a toy wooden snake) aft of the nose cone that kept front and rear runners in contact with the ice on hard turns.

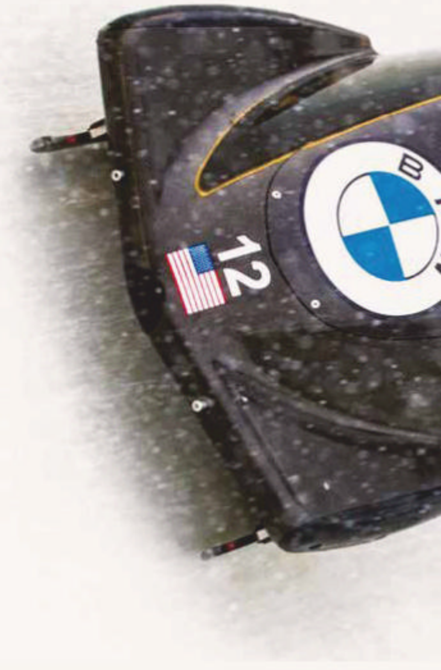
Tyler won Olympic bronze in 1956 and four World Championship medals between 1956 and '59, but his 1956 bronze at Cortina d'Ampezzo, in Italy, would, for the American bobsledders, be the last appearance on the Olympic medal platform in the 20th century.

Instead of immediately shipping Tyler's innovative sled back to the States, the Italians held onto it for nearly a year, and, no surprise, when the next round of Games came along, the sleds from Italy had incorporated the Americans' tech.

As the Italians, Swiss, Soviets and East Germans poured bottomless wellsprings of cash into their bobsledding programs, the poorly funded and badly governed U.S. team languished. "The only thing amateur about amateur sports in America are the people who run them," Morgan lamented. For decades, U.S. bobsledders were forced to pick over the Europeans' used sleds, which had been cast aside to make way for faster designs.

Fifty percent of a winning bob run, Morgan said, is the "push," where amidst a cacophony of howls and cowbells, top athletes explode into a 50-meter sprint before hopping in. The other half is evenly split between human skill and sled technology.





CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: **Excalibur, fabricated for the 1980 Lake Placid Olympics. Lyon Mountain bobsled team with Ironshoes. NASCAR's Geoff Bodine and Brian Shimer's team with a Bo-Dyn sled, Calgary, 1993. U.S.A. bobsled, March 2024.** PAGES 44–45: **Steve Holcomb drives Night Train.**

EXCALIBUR, IRONSHOES AND NIGHT TRAIN PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF JOHN MORGAN. BO-DYN AND 2024 SLED PHOTOGRAPHS BY NANCIE BATTAGLIA

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FROM THE DAY THE FIRST WOODEN SLEDS SHOOK, RATTLED AND ROLLED, DAREDEVIL TEAMS HAVE TURNED TO TECHNOLOGY TO SHAVE AN EYELASH OF TIME IN A SPORT WHERE A SECOND MIGHT AS WELL BE A WEEK.

FAST TIMES:

WHERE TO CATCH THE ACTION

BOBSLEDS WERE BORN in the Swiss town of St. Moritz in the 1870s as a gimmick to entice summer tourists to return in winter. Initially they were unsophisticated wooden platforms not far removed from an old-fashioned toboggan, but with steerable runners. (Steering, perhaps the first innovation, was developed to shush the howls of pedestrians who had been clipped by sleds speeding down Main Street.)

As the sport developed over the years, Lake Placid became an outsized player, boasting "one of the most challenging and historical tracks on the planet," said bobsled promoter John Morgan.

World-class bobsledding will return to Mount Van Hoevenberg March 6–16 for the IBSF Bobsled and Skeleton World Championships, once again turning the eyes of the sporting world to the scene of the 1932 and 1980 Winter Olympics.

This winter will be the 75th World Bobsled Championship since 1931 and the 10th to be held in Lake Placid. And in December 2024, the town generated more bobsledding buzz when it was announced that Lake Placid would be the backup for the 2026 Olympics, should the track being built in Milano-Cortina, Italy, not be finished on time.

The sport has gone through great technological changes since the 1930s, and a meaningful amount is attributable to Lake Placid, where miners, hoteliers and policemen became unlikely stars on the world sporting stage as they perfected their rides.

"They were tinkerers," said Tuffy Latour, a former bobsled driver and current coach. "The whole community was involved."

Each weekend, thousands of fans would get their thrills watching the bobsledders rocket down the mountain at speeds they assumed were approaching 100 miles an hour. Today bobsleds exceed 90 miles per hour, but back then they were nowhere close—in the fans' defense, Latour said, all they had then for reference were motorcars that did well to hit 30.

The quest for bobsledding speed over the years will also be the topic of a live-streamed technology seminar at the championships, featuring the world's top sled builders and engineers. "People [in the U.S.] tried all kinds of crazy stuff, hoping to come up with a bobsled Miracle on Ice," Latour said. "It's amazing all the technology that goes into this."

For tickets, schedules and more information, visit lakeplacidworldchampionships.com.

Morgan personally set out to recruit the best athletes he could find, at one point being shooed off an infield while trying to poach talent at a track and field event. By the 1992 Olympics in Albertville, France, the U.S. two-man sled boasted the skilled pilot Brian Shimer and transcendent NFL running back Herschel Walker. But with hand-me-down tech, the pair could do no better than seventh. "It's another average result for the United States," Morgan told his network audience. "And they won't win Olympic medals until they start driving made-in-America sleds."

Just as he hoped, this U.S.-directed smack raised the hackles of NASCAR legend Geoff Bodine, who could be counted upon to love two things: speed, and the United States of America. Bodine recruited Bob Cuneo and his Chassis Dynamics company, founding the Bo-Dyn project, bringing NASCAR know-how and professionalism to the Olympics' most technological sport.

While the trend today is to standardize sled design in the name of fairness and cost savings, Berghorn said bobsledding remains a meticulously detailed sport in which achieving a 100-percent effort breaks down into tiny, one-percent increments. "Bobsledding is about exploiting those one percents," he said.

Over a mile-long course, an unfathomable amount of energy must be absorbed and released in something resembling control, which is just as important as speed. When American bobsledders noticed that Hughes Aircraft had figured out how to polish Space Shuttle heat shields to a frictionless gloss, they figured the technology could be applied to bobsled runners.

Which it could, but the first and only pilot to try them crawled from his sled at the bottom of the run, white as a ghost, emphatic he would never do *that* again. "He couldn't control it; he must have caught every lip on the course," Morgan said. "It was an exhilarating ride."

Nor was Bo-Dyn the first automotive organization to lend its skills to bobsledding. In the 1960s, General Motors briefly entered the sport, and built some blindingly fast sleds that were more than

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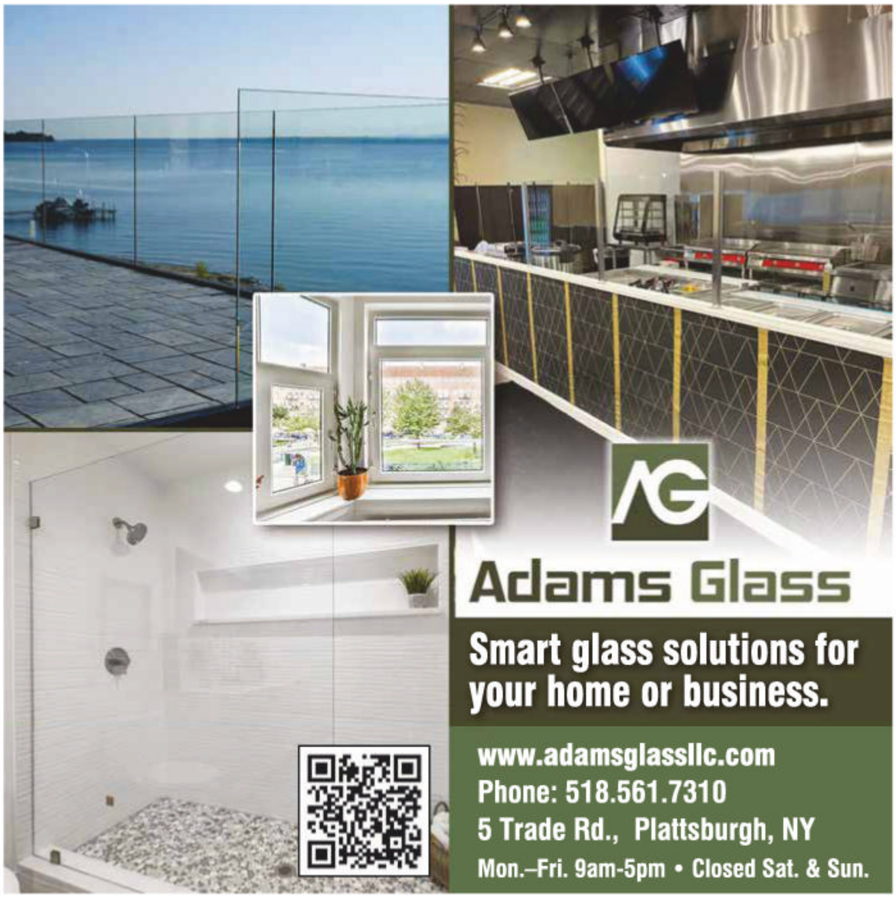

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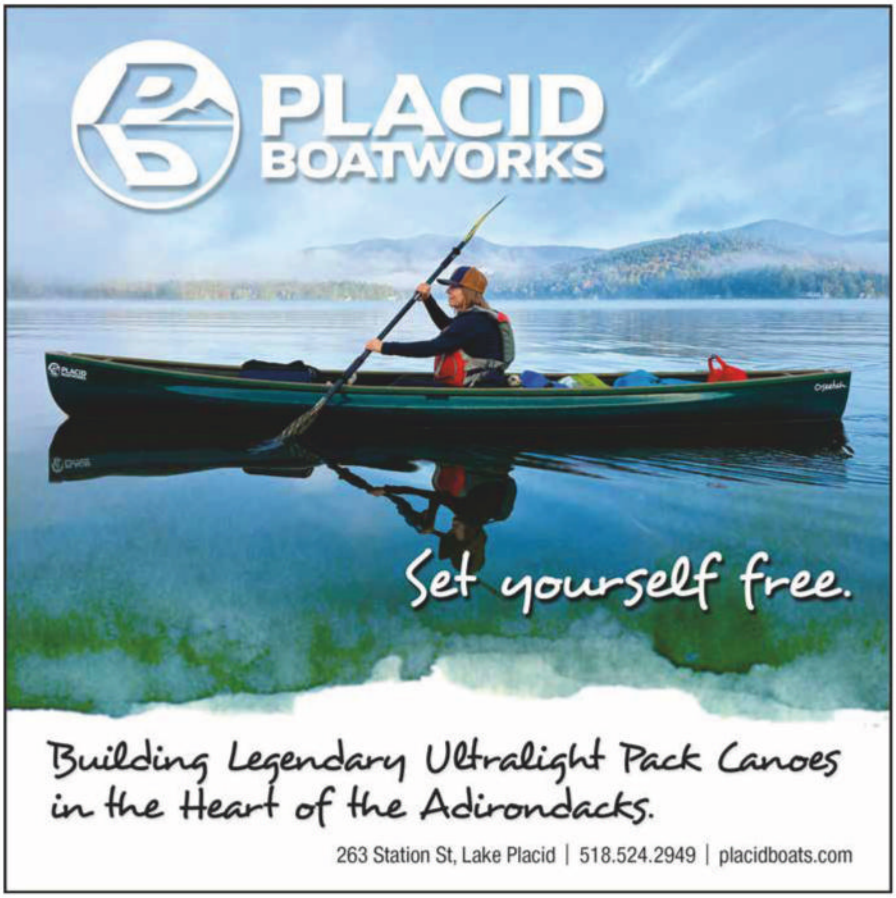

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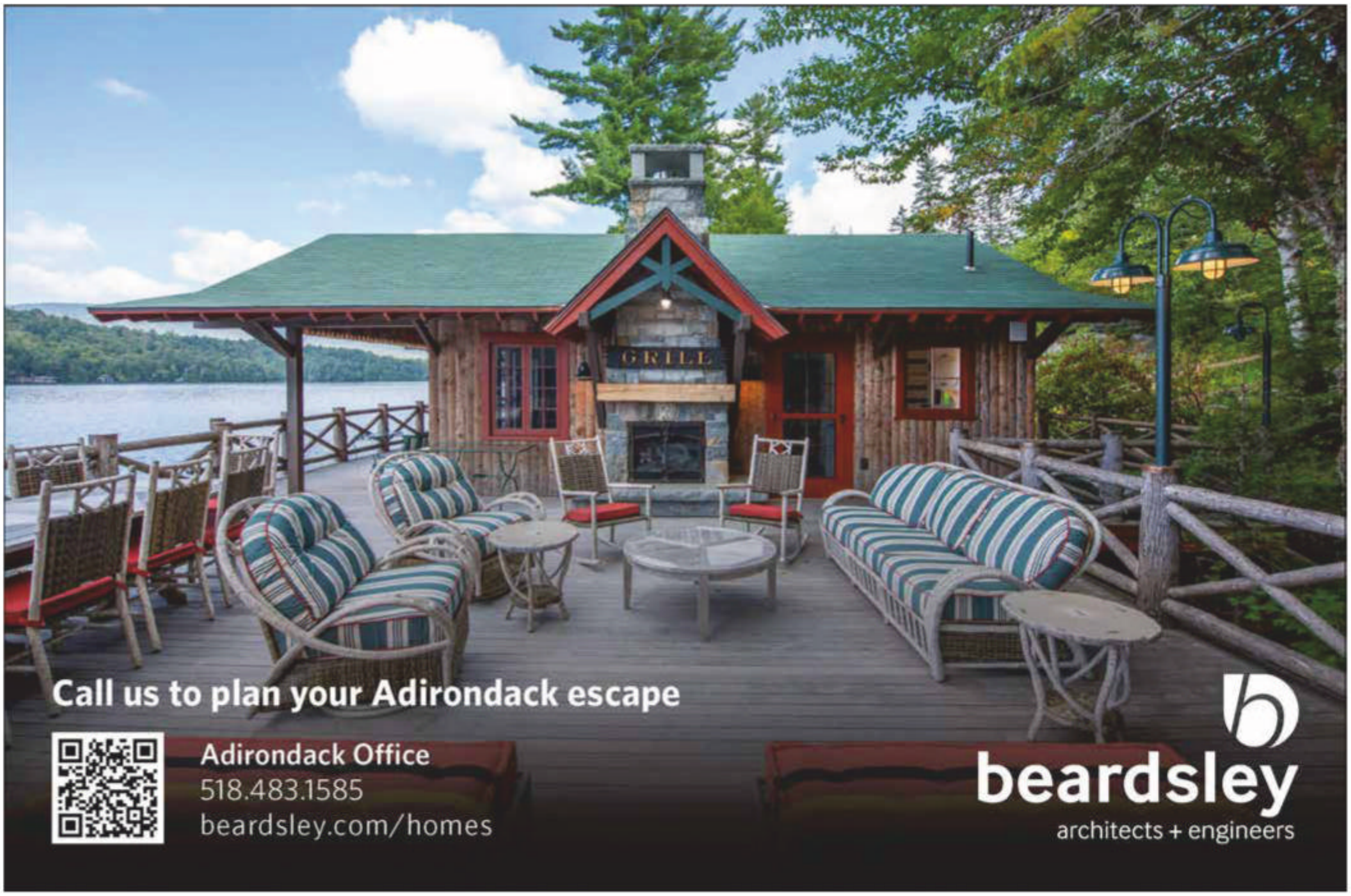
the drivers were able to handle. So too did a Wisconsin automotive company produce, per *The New York Times*, a “revolutionary” dream sled named Excalibur fabricated for the 1980 Lake Placid Olympics. So innovative was the steering mechanism, Excalibur was kept under lock and key, no visitors or cameras allowed. Today, a framed copy of Excalibur’s blueprints can be had on Etsy for $7.53, which is about as much real-world success as the design ever had.

When he walked into the disarray that was American bobsledding in 1992, Cuneo was struck by the primitive construction of the sleds. “I couldn’t believe how crudely they were built,” he said. “Anything we did was going to be jewelry compared to what everyone else had.” Still, bobsleds weren’t cars, and the learning curve was steep. Using wind tunnels, 3D-scanned images and computer-assisted drawings, Cuneo’s small team worked on the granular level to coax out improvements in speed that were all but imperceptible. “We would work 1,000 hours to gain a hundredth of a second,” he said.

The problem with whiz-bang designs up to that point, Morgan said, was that they all attempted to increase drivability, and in bobsledding, “the winner is not the one who drives the most, it’s the one who drives the least.”

At the 1977 World Championships, Hans Hiltebrand, a Zurich electrician, knew he could finish no higher than fourth, in part because the Eastern Bloc athletes were gulping steroids like peanuts. So he inlaid his runners with a strip of Teflon, which other drivers discovered a half-hour before the competition. The East Germans freaked out at this advantage, and overcompensated by taking too many aggressive and self-defeating chances. Many years later, the Swiss driver confessed that Teflon had no effect, other than getting him inside the heads of the competition.

This, the human psyche, lent itself to the NASCAR mindset, where everything revolves around the driver. Cuneo, whose engineers skewed Italian and came to be known as Team Provolone, peppered drivers with questions about



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what worked for them and what didn't. He discovered that it didn't so much matter whether the sled was under control, so long as pilots felt it was under control. When they felt comfortable, they drove splendidly. And slowly but surely, results began to follow.

In 2002 at Salt Lake City, Jill Bakken and Vonetta Flowers won gold, becoming the first American bobsledders to medal in the Olympics since Tyler in 1956. And they did so on a Bo-Dyn sled.

On the men's side it was the late Steve Holcomb who transcended the sport, winning medal after medal including the greatest bobsledding prize of all, gold in four-man sled at the 2010 Olympic Games in Vancouver aboard a Bo-Dyn sled they called Night Train.

At its first public trial, Night Train had arrived not with typically bright colors, but with a dull, black finish. So fearsome was its speed that the Europeans speculated that the Americans had discovered some kind of magic paint that slid without resistance. In fact, they'd simply run out of time to do anything but spray on a coat of black primer.

The great technological change was a redesign that allowed the three pushers to sit lower in the sled, minimizing a surprising amount of wind resistance. Together with Holcomb's genius, Night Train built an insurmountable lead through the first three heats.

All the Americans needed to do to win gold was stay upright. The difficulty lay in a deadly curve on the Vancouver track that had caused multiple crashes and made one team withdraw in fear. Holcomb named it 50-50, after the odds of making it through without crashing. Broadcasting the race to the nation, Morgan and everyone else held their breath as Night Train approached 50-50 on its final run. When the team made it out the other end, he uttered one word: "Through." Everyone knew what that word meant. For the first time since 1948, the American four-man bobsled was golden. ▲

Read Tim Rowland's "The Dew Drop" (April 2024) about the early Adirondack bobsledding scene, at www.adirondacklife.com.

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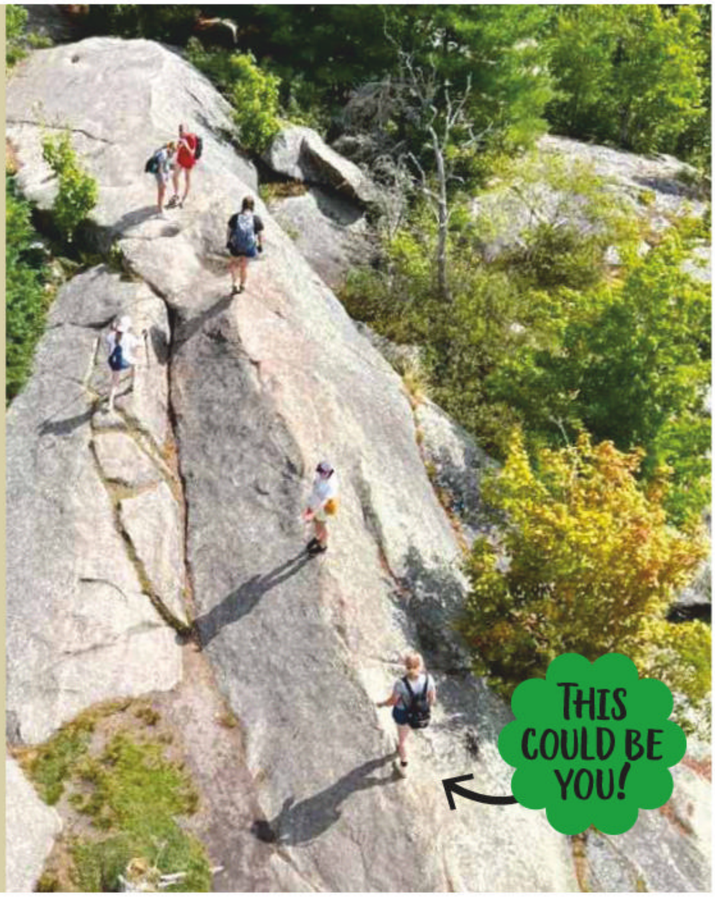
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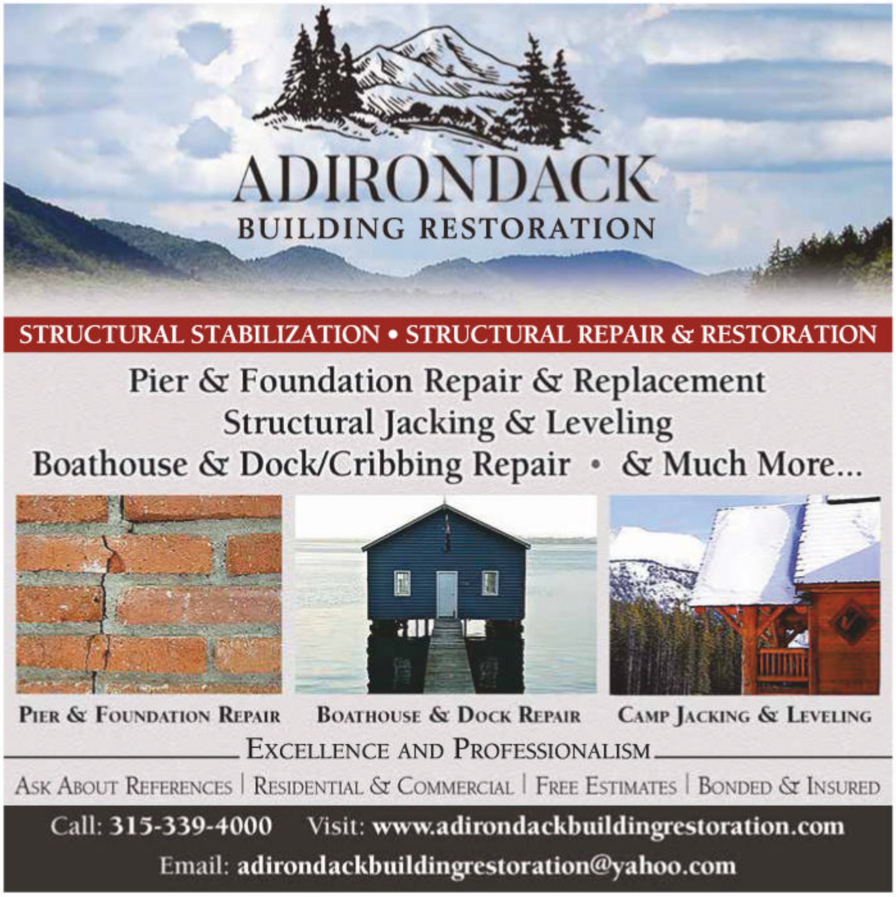

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GROUNDBREAKERS

Continued from page 42

field's fame grew following the Marcy expedition. He may be best known as the founder and first president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, which publishes the journal *Science*.

BOTANIST

John Torrey

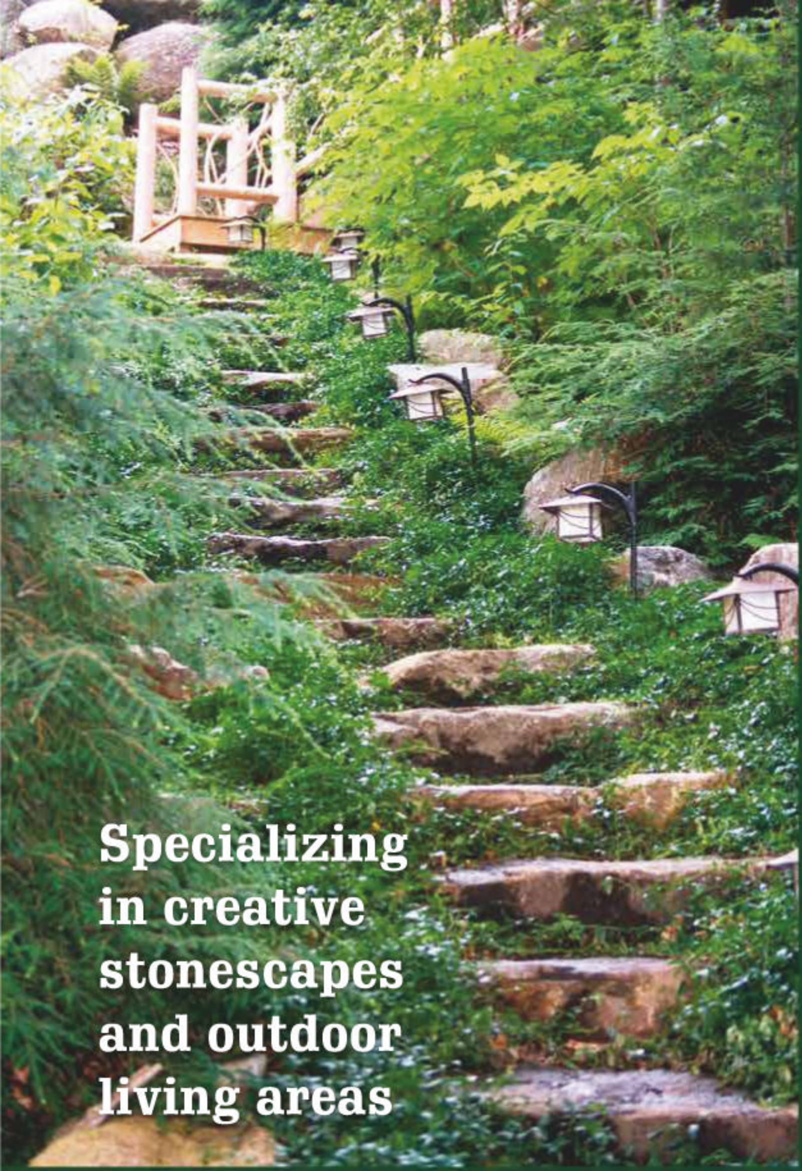
(1796–1873)

Torrey's education began, curiously, in what we would now call a "minimum security" prison in New York, where his father was warden. When John was a teenager, his father let him interact with some inmates. Among these was Amos Eaton (later Emmons's professor), who'd been charged with forgery in connection with a land dispute. Eaton was well versed in many of the sciences and tutored young Torrey in botany.

Torrey chose medicine for his formal education, although his real love was botany. He received his MD from the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York, now a part of Columbia University. He held faculty positions at West Point, City College of New York, and Columbia. At the time of the Marcy climb, he was also professor of chemistry at the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University). No matter where he was or what he was doing, he continued to study plants, amassing what was to become an extensive collection of American flora. Parts of this collection remain today at the New York Botanical Garden and the herbarium of Columbia University.

The year before the Marcy expedition, Torrey was appointed botanist of the State of New York, and began work on a catalog of the state's flora. The climb was an opportunity for him to collect specimens of alpine and subalpine flora (before this became illegal). Six years after the climb, Torrey published his two-volume *Flora of the State of New York*, a compendium of all plants found in the state.

After 1837 his reputation as a botanist grew exponentially. He accompanied John C. Fremont on an expedition to the Pacific northwest, studying that region's flora extensively. He founded



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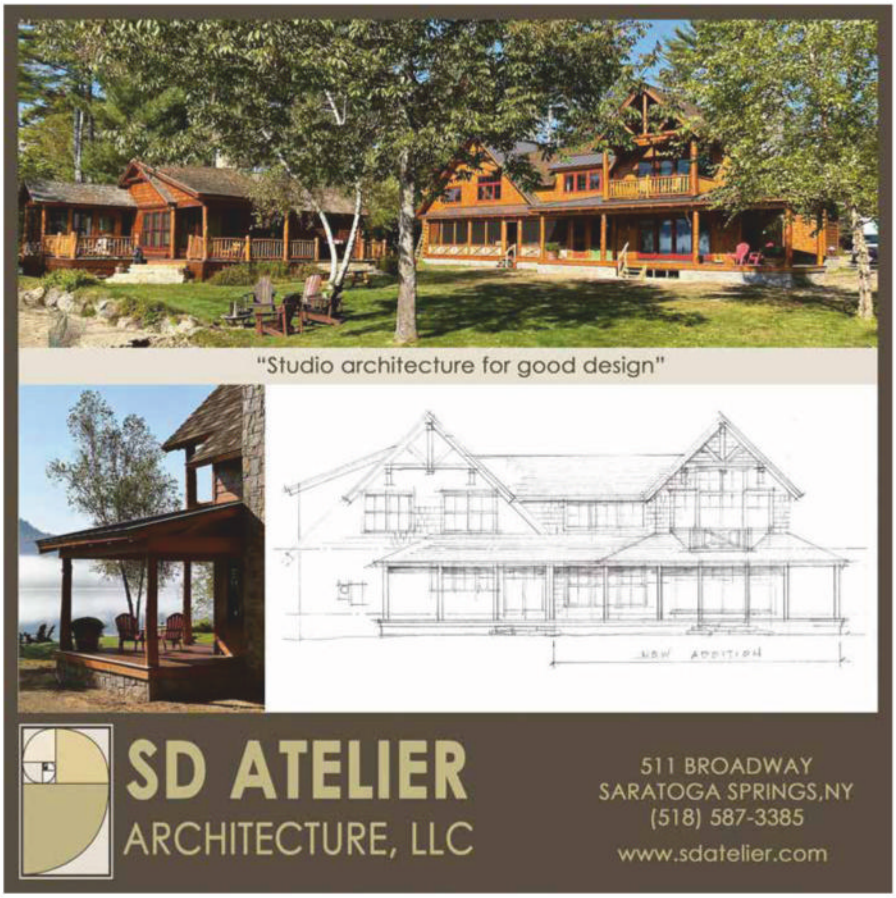
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the New York Academy of Sciences and was elected as one of the early members of the National Academy of Sciences. He established the Torrey Botanical Society in New York City, which exists to this day. *The Journal of the Torrey Botanical Society* is a leading scientific botanical publication.

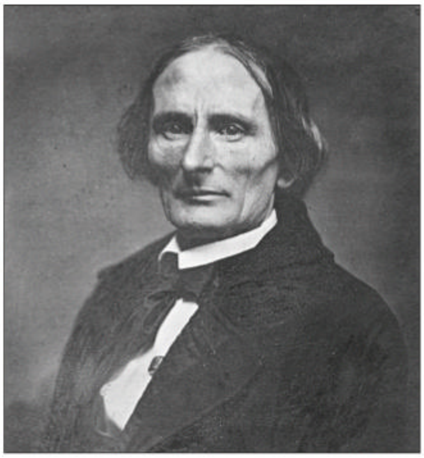
GEOLOGIST

James Hall

(1811–1898)

Hall, the other "geologist" memorialized on the plaque, was only 25 years old at the time of the expedition. He had graduated from Rensselaer, where he had been a student of both Emmons and Amos Eaton. He stayed on as a faculty member and collaborated with Emmons until the two had their famous falling out.

After his work on the Adirondack exploration, he became chief geologist of one of the other districts in New York. His work gradually moved into paleontology, and he is largely considered to have established paleontology as a field in the U.S. Hall's magnum opus was the 13-volume *Palaeontology of the State of New York*. Along with Torrey, he was a founder and early member of the National Academy of Sciences.



C.C. INGHAM PORTRAIT FROM THE ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART

ARTIST

C. C. (Charles Cromwell) Ingham

(1797-1863)

Ingham, shown above, was an artist, as fully accomplished in that field as the rest of the team was in natural science. He was renowned as a portrait painter

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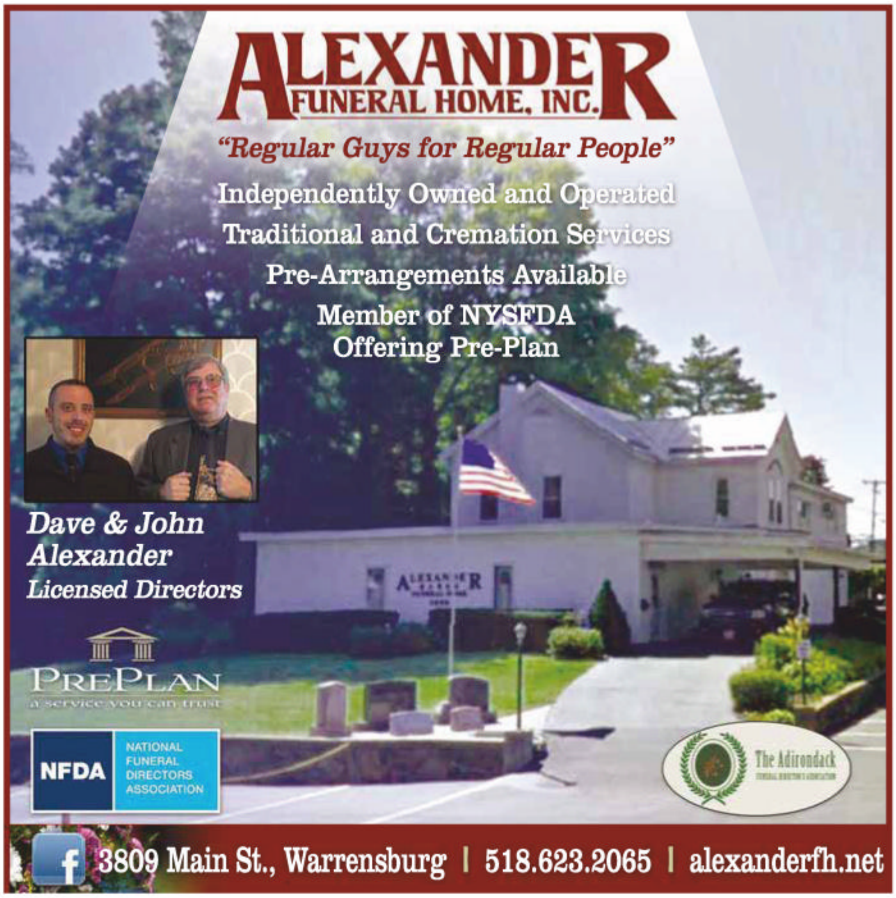
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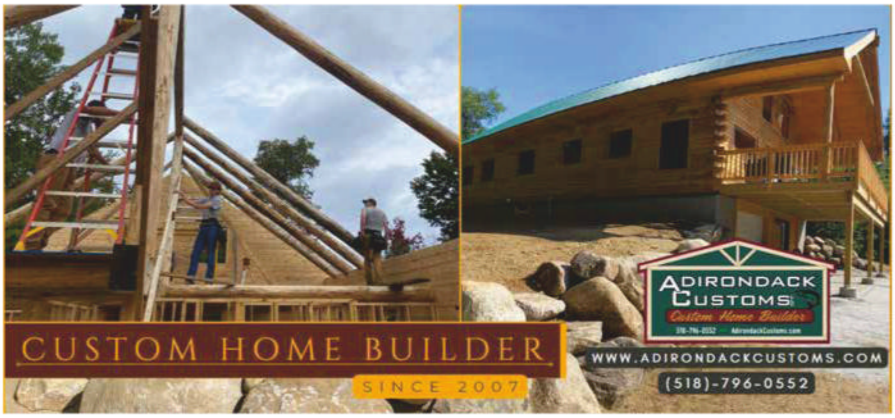
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in New York City, specializing in socially prominent young women. His work is included in the permanent collection of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art and he was a founder of the National Academy of Design.

For a couple of reasons, Ingham was a peculiar choice for the expedition. First, he was not known for landscapes. More important, Ingham was not an outdoorsman. The rest of the explorers were not ivory tower academics. Their work regularly took them on extended treks into uncharted territory. Emmons, Torrey, and the others would have been entirely comfortable in the Adirondack wilderness. Not so for Ingham, who apparently was more comfortable in Manhattan salons than crossing the Opalescent. He reportedly had a great deal of difficulty on the final climb of Mount Marcy, fainting several times and spending much of the summit time resting, not sketching.

Some of Ingham's landscape sketches from the expedition were colorized, lithographed and published in Emmons's reports. They were also produced separately for purchase. He used at least one of them, a view of Indian Pass, to produce a larger oil landscape which is now at the Adirondack Experience, in Blue Mountain Lake.

ARTIST

Ebenezer Emmons, Jr.

(1822–1907)

Emmons's 15-year-old son accompanied his father on the expedition. As the youngest member, by far, he was also the only one to see the dawn of the 20th century. His obituary mentions the Marcy expedition as a turning point in the boy's life, setting him on a career path. He went on to become a nature artist of considerable repute, working at first with his father, providing illustrations of plants, insects and fossils for his father's scientific reports. He finished his career as a nature illustrator for the state. Many of Emmons Junior's natural history drawings were made into lithographs which are still on the market. Some of these images are spectacular and demand a good price.

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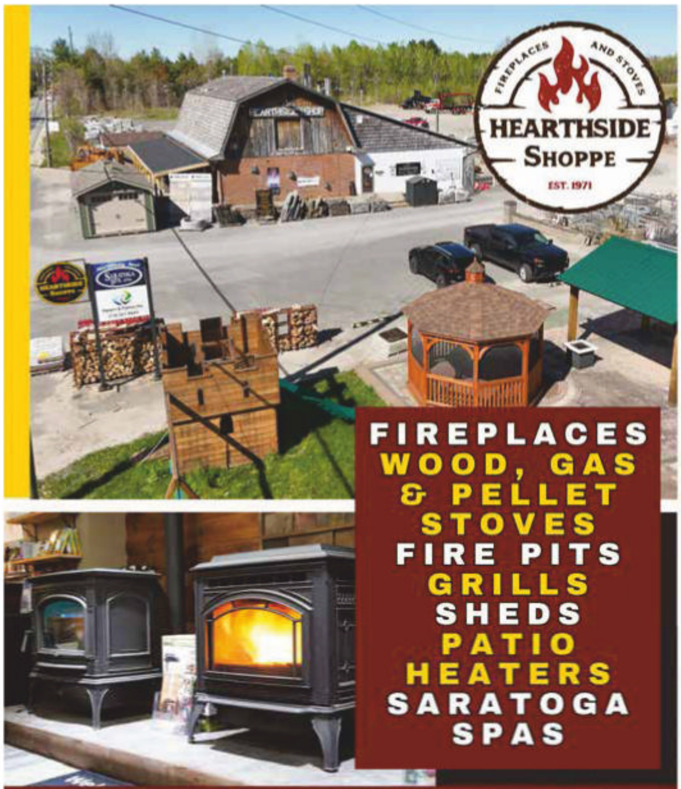

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Continued from page 43

species found on the alpine summits have been there for tens of thousands of years. When standing on top of Marcy, you are essentially in a living museum, looking back in time to what the Northeast was like during the end of the last Ice Age. For many of these plant species, you'd need to drive thousands of miles into Canada before seeing them grow abundantly. Though these plants have adapted to handle the extreme winds, ice buildup, and short growing seasons, they have not adapted to handle hikers' footsteps. Human disturbance is the greatest threat to these plants. That is why an informed hiking public is key to the protection and survival of these rare and special plants.

What can hikers do to help ?

The best thing is as simple as staying on only bare rock surfaces at all times when above tree line. Areas of exposed dirt and gravel are vulnerable to human footsteps; if left undisturbed, plants will regrow in those bare areas. Aside from staying on bare rock, hikers can share the message to "Do the Rock Walk!" with others. If you are up on Marcy, Algonquin, Wright, Giant or Cascade, say hi to the summit steward, and ask them to show you some of the plants—they will be more than happy to!

What essentials should everyone carry on a trip up Marcy?

At approximately 15 miles round trip for the shortest route, Marcy is a long hike. When heading into the backcountry, hikers should carry the 10 essentials:

- Navigation: map, compass, GPS and the knowledge to use them.
- Sun protection
- Insulation: jacket, hat, gloves, shell
- Illumination: flashlight, headlamp and spare batteries—not a phone light
- First-aid kit
- Fire starting
- Repair kit and tools
- Nutrition
- Hydration
- Emergency shelter

The Adirondack Mountain Club also recommends bringing a potty kit (trowel, toilet paper, hand sanitizer). ▲

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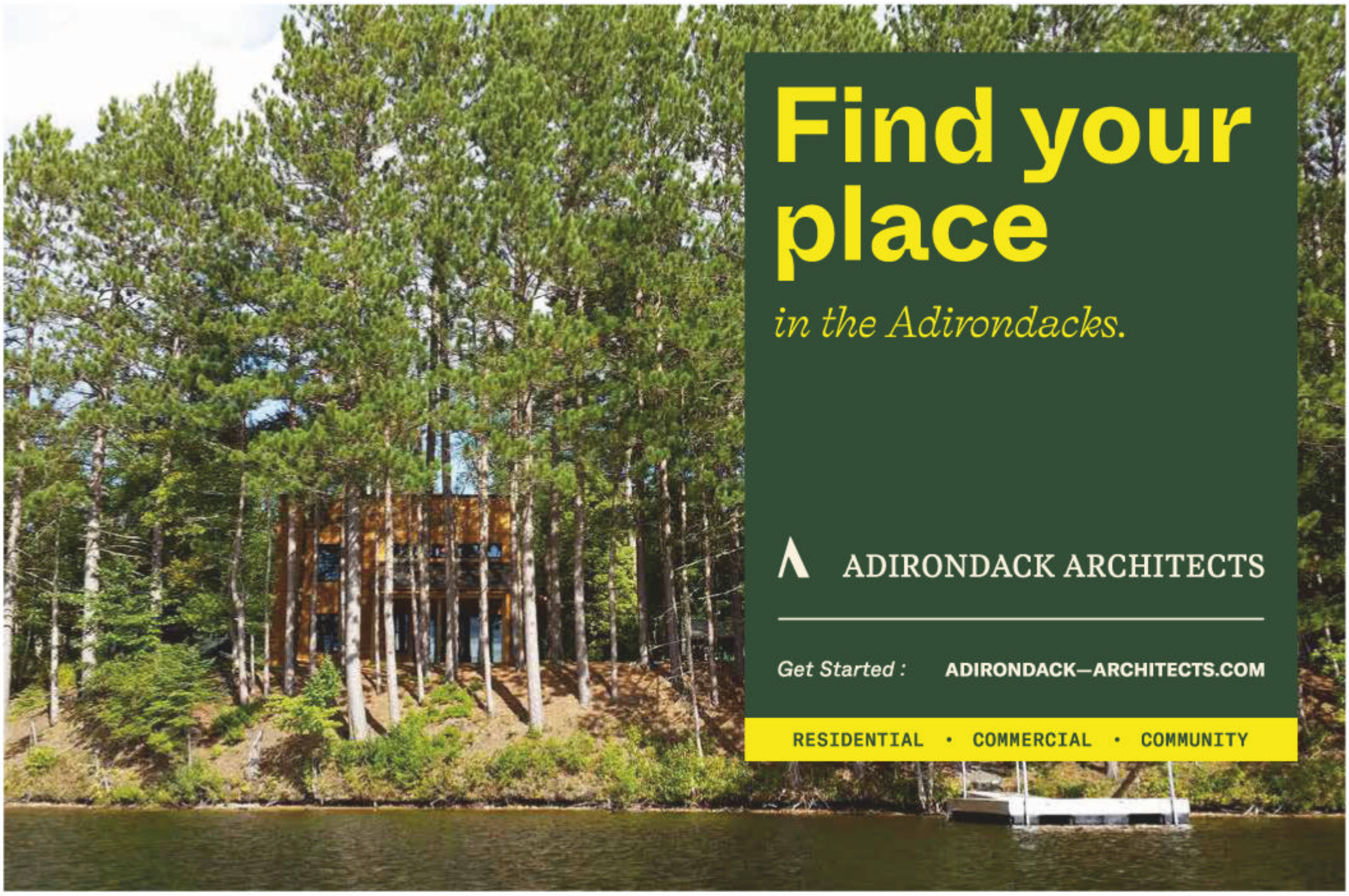

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SPORTING SCENE

Whiteface Mountain's new-style snow guns require less energy than older models.

Let It Snow

How ski centers are adapting to warmer winters

BY ERIN SCHUMAKER

Griffin Smith was born into a snow family. He's been skiing from the time he could stand. Before that, his parents toted him around in a backpack through the snow. His dad runs Dewey Mountain Recreation Center, a small cross-country-ski and snowshoe establishment in Saranac Lake.

Smith, now 23, is carrying on the winter sports mantle. He's a member of Paul Smith College's celebrated Nordic ski team. (A documentary about the team, *Coach Matt and the Outdoor 'Cats*, premiered in Utah during last year's U.S. Biathlon Youth and Junior team trials.) But key members of the team have graduated and the squad has a lot to prove this season.

Then there's the issue of snow.

Smith is young, but he can see that winters aren't the same as they were when he was growing up in the Adirondacks and rarely worried about whether there'd be enough snow to ski.

In winter months, the Adirondack Mountains were once synonymous with ice and snow. Lake Placid hosted the Winter Olympics twice, in 1932 and 1980. But facing the prospect of shorter, milder winters, the region's winter sports facilities aren't leaving their fate to chance. Instead, ski operators are adapting by investing in new snowmaking technology and transforming into three-season destinations.

"The snow reliability has dramatically decreased," Smith said in late December, describing a frustrating cycle of rain and snow that punctuates North Country winters these days.

"I'm sitting in my kitchen right now, and two days ago I was skiing on some of the best snow I've skied on all season," he said. "Now I'm looking at my yard and it's just grass."

Climate science backs up Smith's observations. The Earth's poles and higher-latitude regions, including the Adirondack Park, are warming faster than the global average. Ice caps and glaciers are melting. Changes in the park are slow and vary from year to year, but the ice is melting here, too.

Keeping snow on the slopes requires flexibility and persistence. More than 100 ski resorts in New York State have closed since the late 1960s.

"You can see it on the lakes," said Curt Stager, a professor of natural science at Paul Smith's. "We're seeing the ice and snow go away before our eyes."

He pointed to Saranac Lake's winter carnival, a tradition dating back to 1897, for which volunteers cut blocks of ice from the lake to build a winter palace. The ice cutters prefer foot-long blocks to ensure the palace doesn't melt, but with thinner ice last year, they were taking precautions and clearing snow from the blocks, utilizing the freezing overnight temperatures to keep the structure intact.

Talking to the ice cutters compelled Stager to do a little research. He looked up more than a century's worth of data on wintertime temperatures in the area. Around 1900, most winters had between four and 10 deep-cold nights that hit 20 degrees below zero or colder.

"Now it's two or three, if you're lucky—if you like deep cold, which I do."

Stager's more formal research, including a 2022 article on climate change in the Adirondacks, suggests the park,

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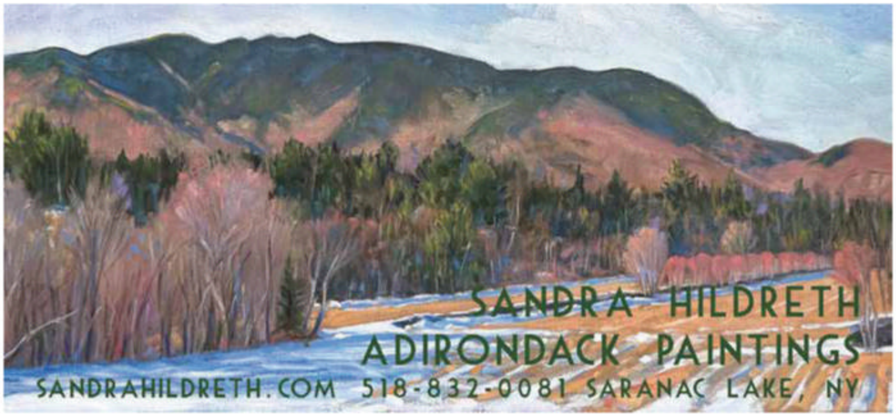
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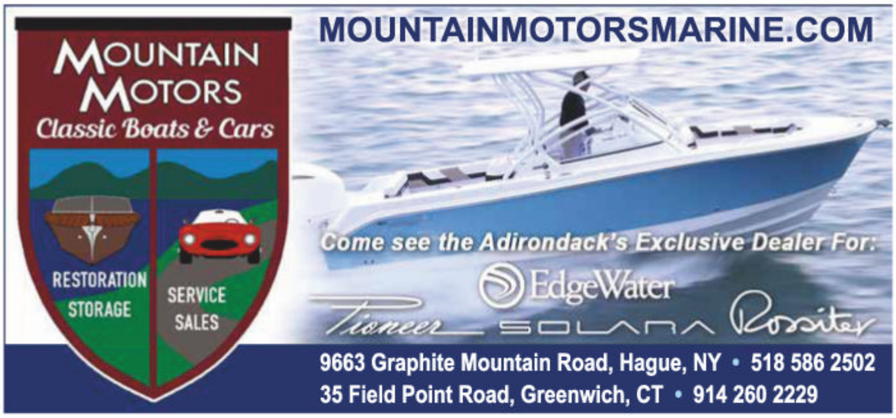
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situated high above sea level, has become significantly warmer and wetter since 1900.

The changing climate means Adirondack winters are likely to shrink by a month or more by 2100, Stager and his coauthors project. As the buildup of greenhouse gases continues to warm the planet, “reliably snowy winters in the Adirondacks could potentially cease to exist altogether, possibly before the end of the next century,” they write.

Those snippets of wintertime change, already observable within the Blue Line, are part of a global pattern. “It’s not even necessarily that you always get less snow,” Stager said, echoing Smith, who has taken his climate science classes at Paul Smith’s. “The problem is it’s less reliable.”

Ski operators already understand the bottom line: we can’t count on snow anymore—at least not the natural stuff.

Meeting Mother Nature Head On

While Smith and Stager are rightly worried about the future of snow in the Adirondack Park, the region’s ski resorts, especially the big guys, aren’t ready to give up the fight for winter recreation just yet. Instead they’re using technology and upgrading their snowmaking equipment in an effort to meet Mother Nature head on.

“You have to go and put the newest and the greatest snowmaking systems in right now to keep up,” said Bruce Transue, vice president of Alpine Venues Operations at the New York State Olympic Regional Development Authority (ORDA), which operates Whiteface and Gore Mountains, along with the Catskills’ Belleayre Mountain.

Keeping snow on the slopes requires flexibility and persistence. More than 100 ski resorts have closed in New York State since the late 1960s, a New York State Climate Impacts Assessment found.

But Transue’s no newbie. He’s been working in the ski business since 1978. And he knows a thing or two about making snow. He’s seen the weather change. In the 1980s and early 1990s, he explained, you could make snow for two or three weeks straight. “Now, if you get a full five days in, that’s a lot, without Mother Nature raining on your parade.”

To make snow, hoses shoot compressed air and compressed water into a nozzle at high speeds, where the two mix and the water atomizes into droplets. If the air outside is cold enough, those droplets crystallize as they shoot from the cannon and fall to the ground as snow.

The formula itself is simple. As Transue says: “A little air, a little water, lots of money.” In practice, it’s easier said than done. Making snow is more art—or perhaps, alchemy—than science.

Early in the season, the mountains start snowmaking when there’s a stretch of cold days forecasted, around 28 degrees or colder. Much warmer and the water droplets would fall to the ground as extremely soggy snow or rain.

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as possible, it's crucial to take advantage of so-called snowmaking windows of opportunity, when the temperatures remain cold for an extended period. "If you're not taking every window of opportunity to make snow, you're in trouble. You're not going to keep up," Transue said.

Whiteface, Gore and Belleayre have worked to modernize their snow systems in recent years, adding new pipes, air plants, pumps and plenty of new snow guns. The upgraded equipment uses less air and energy than the older models did, allowing the mountains to run roughly five to seven new-style guns with the same amount of energy it takes to run one high-energy, old-style gun.

That's important, since the energy involved in snowmaking, like pumping water uphill and compressing air, makes up a significant chunk of ski mountains' electricity bills. "Your cost of snowmaking is huge," Transue said. "That's why the efficiency factor has to come in now."

Labor shortages are another stressor mountains are mitigating with new technology. While the old guns were portable, requiring workers to run a hose to them prior to snowmaking, the new ones are attached to water lines and fixed on poles. "You can't find the help anymore to run the old-fashioned way," Transue said.

Many mountains use a mix of the two styles. Ground guns are good for narrower trails, while the newer, fixed guns have the advantage of being higher up, which provides artificial flakes more hang time, allowing them to fall more like natural snow.

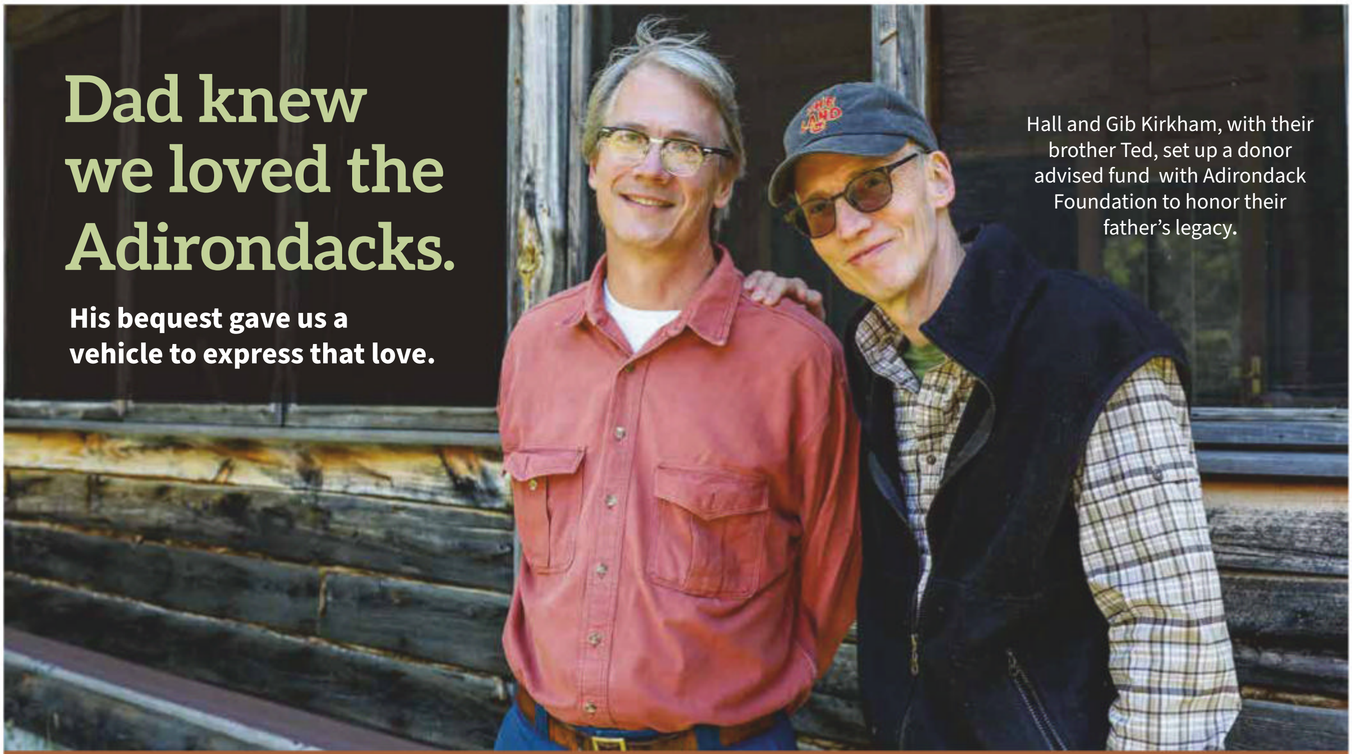
While he's clear-eyed about the challenges ahead, Transue is also optimistic about Adirondack operators' ability to keep pace with nature, at least in the near-term. "I think in the foreseeable future, we're going to be OK," he said. "We've heard this for the last 15, 20 years, that ski areas won't be viable," he added.

"There's still a future of skiing out there. I think we have to be smart on how operations go a little bit down the road."

Smaller mountains in the region are addressing challenges wrought by climate change on a smaller scale.

Oak Mountain Ski Center, in Speculator, is one of the Adirondacks' oldest running ski resorts. The owners are taking sustainability seriously. They've opted not to add chemicals or pollutants to the water they use for snowmaking since, when the snow thaws, it returns to nearby rivers and streams. Oak Mountain has also ramped up snowmaking and now uses artificial snow on eight runs, compared to three in the past. Their reasoning is similar to the big resorts: it's too risky to depend on inconsistent natural snow.

When it comes to sustainability, young winter athletes are thinking even more long term. They're hyperaware of climate change, said Smith, the Nordic skier. He pointed to Protect Our Winters, a climate advocacy organization for the



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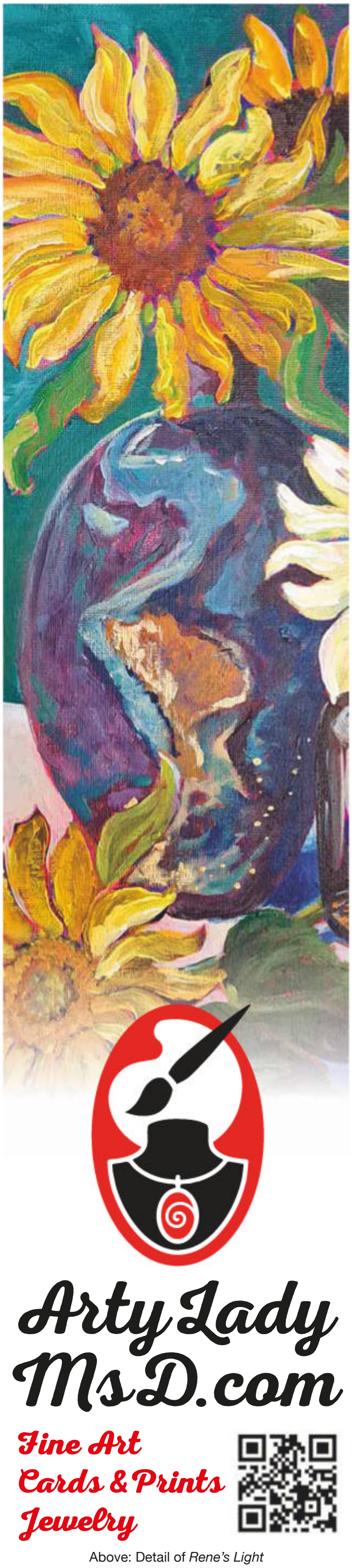
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outdoor community, which includes Jessie Diggins and Gus Schumacher, professional Nordic skiers who've made climate activism central to their careers. The pair, along with skiers, skaters and ice climbers, use their platform to lobby Congress to take policy action to address climate change.

Looking Beyond Winter

With the future of winter recreation in flux, ski resorts are considering how to operate during what was once the off-season.

"You have to get creative," Transue said of transforming a ski resort into a three-season experience. That can mean warmer-weather outdoor recreation, like hiking, mountain-biking and zip-lining, as well as events, such as concerts and festivals. Resorts are even considering investing in more wedding facilities.

A promising blueprint for year-round viability is Mountain Jam, a three-day music festival, which will be held at Belleayre this year, after a five-year pandemic hiatus. Festival-goers can camp at the mountain's base during the June event, which will feature Moe. and other popular jam-bands.

Mountain Jam comes on the heels of a successful free Friday night concert series Belleayre hosted last summer, which included a food-truck village and drew thousands of guests, many of whom had never been to Belleayre before. "We sold a lot of season passes to those people," Transue said. Those off-season efforts also benefit the surrounding areas, which depend on tourism dollars.

Meanwhile, Lake Placid is returning to its roots as a sports-and-games host, this time for competitions that don't involve snow. In November, Mount Van Hoevenberg hosted World Cup cross-country mountain-bike races, which attracted thousands of visitors to the region. This year, ORDA is scheduled to host the World Cup games again, for both cross-country and downhill mountain-bike racing. In addition to Van Hoevenberg, organizers are considering Whiteface as one of the competition sites, although that would involve permitting and clearance from the Adirondack Park Agency.

Ski resort operators aren't the only ones modulating their expectations about winters to come. A post-college career in outdoor recreation appeals to Smith, but he's not hinging his prospects on the white stuff. He recently got into road cycling and his teammates are experimenting with road-bike racing and mountain running.

"Snow is not guaranteed in the future," he said.

Erin Schumaker is a health and science reporter who lives in Brooklyn. She grew up in Saratoga Springs, spending summers at her family's camp on Lake George. Her work has appeared in *Politico*, *HuffPost*, *The Guardian* and *New York Daily News*. She wrote "In the Weeds," about Eurasian watermilfoil, in our October 2023 issue.

THE COLD, HARD FACTS

- Whiteface's 10-year average snowfall: 181.2 inches
- Whiteface has 650+ snow guns and 40+ miles of pipe
- Average snow made per season at Whiteface: 290–320 million gallons
- Whiteface spent ~$1M on electricity last year, with 20% of their electric energy supplied by their off-site solar farm
- Average temperatures in the Adirondacks are expected to rise by 4.6 to 6.6 degrees by the 2050s, compared to a 1981–2010 baseline
- By the 2050s, Lake Placid is projected to have between 9 and 15 days below zero, compared to 33 days historically
- The downhill ski season in New York is expected to drop from 68 days on average to between 31 and 42 days by the 2050s

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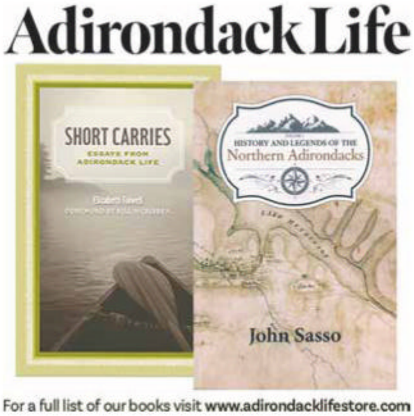
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The wealth of Adirondack chestnut trees in the late 1800s enticed generations of red squirrels into the water.

Sometimes You Feel Like a Nut

The snack squirrels dive for

BY NANCY CASTALDO

We've all pondered the age-old question of why the chicken crossed the road, but did we ever ask why the squirrel crossed the lake?

Around the turn of the 20th century it was a common sight to see a squirrel using its hind legs to paddle along in the water, using its tail as a rudder. *Life-Histories of Northern Animals*, published in 1909, noted that "at the southern end at Lake George, in early autumn, it is sometimes an everyday occurrence to see Red-squirrels swimming across the lake from west to east (about two miles)—never in the opposite direction. The chestnut grows abundantly on the eastern side of the lake, but it is comparatively scarce on the western, and these extensive migrations always take place in years when the yield of chestnuts is large."

Chestnut-searching swimming squirrels were not limited to Lake George. Nineteenth-century studies of American red squirrels (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*) in the mountains also report sightings of the rodents swimming across Big Moose, Long and Brantingham Lakes. Adirondack guide James Higby observed as many as 50 squirrels crossing Big Moose Lake in 1877.

However strange this behavior might seem, it illustrates an evolutionary dance between squirrels and nut trees. Squirrels swim because they are hungry. During "mast years," trees produce more food for squirrels, who have bigger

ILLUSTRATION BY MARK WILSON

litters. The year following a "mast year" offers far less food. Hence, they cross the water to find more nuts.

The Great Squirrel Migration of 1968, for instance, followed a "mast year." Squirrels crossed roads, lakes and even the Hudson River to search for food. The vast number of crossings made headlines in local papers.

Massive Adirondack chestnut trees and their tasty nuts were not only appreciated by native squirrels, they also appeared in many works of art at the turn of the century, including Robert Melvin Decker's *The Old Chestnuts at Bolton, Lake George*. Alfred Stieglitz, who had a home on Lake George in the early 20th century, captured a dying chestnut tree in a 1927 photograph, perfectly encapsulating the trees' fate in the Adirondacks and across the country. Those chestnut trees, a boon for red squirrels, were doomed when non-native Chinese chestnut trees entered the United States with a lethal fungus.

Roughly a century after Stieglitz took that stark photo, I sat on the southern end of Lake George, not far from his home, and did not witness a single squirrel swimming in the lake. I also haven't been alive long enough to have seen the forests of majestic chestnut trees Decker memorialized in the 1890s. The lack of chestnut trees altered the composition of the forests and the behavior of the wildlife that depended upon them.

But there are still Adirondack trees worth a paddle. This August, photos of an eastern gray squirrel—a species that favors seeds and nuts from maples, beech and other hardwoods—swimming toward the mainland, about 100 yards out from Assembly Point, were posted on the Lake George NY Boaters Facebook group.

So, why did the squirrel cross the lake? The answer is simple—to get more food. If you keep your eyes on the water and the nut trees, you might also catch a glimpse of a swimming squirrel in an Adirondack lake.

Nancy Castaldo is an award-winning author whose upcoming book, *Consider the Squirrel*, will be released this fall.

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FIREFIGHTER

Meet Smokey, the youngest member of the Saranac Lake Volunteer Fire Department. At four months, she's already begun her training, though Head Firedriver Rick Yorkey says she's got some work to do. "She's dropping, but she's not rolling."

This pup—with a "calm and sweet" disposition, says Yorkey—continues the firehouse's tradition of a Dalmatian mascot. Back in the day, Yorkey explains, the dogs "ran with horses and wagons to protect the horses and keep them in a straight line." Photographs show a Dalmatian with the village's fire wagon in the 1800s; from then on there was a Smokey on and off through the years, becoming more of an ambassador of education after horses gave way to engines. Today, during fire-prevention classes, Smokey's job is to ease kids' nerves and exhibit what to do—stop, drop and roll—if a person's clothes catch fire.

Saranac Lake has five full-time drivers, so this Smokey—the seventh—is well cared for at her firehouse home. And it's a bustling place. Yorkey, who's been a driver at the station for 36 years, says they ran 2,050 rescues and almost 398 fire calls in 2024—"pretty busy for a little town."

PHOTOGRAPH BY NANCIE BATTAGLIA

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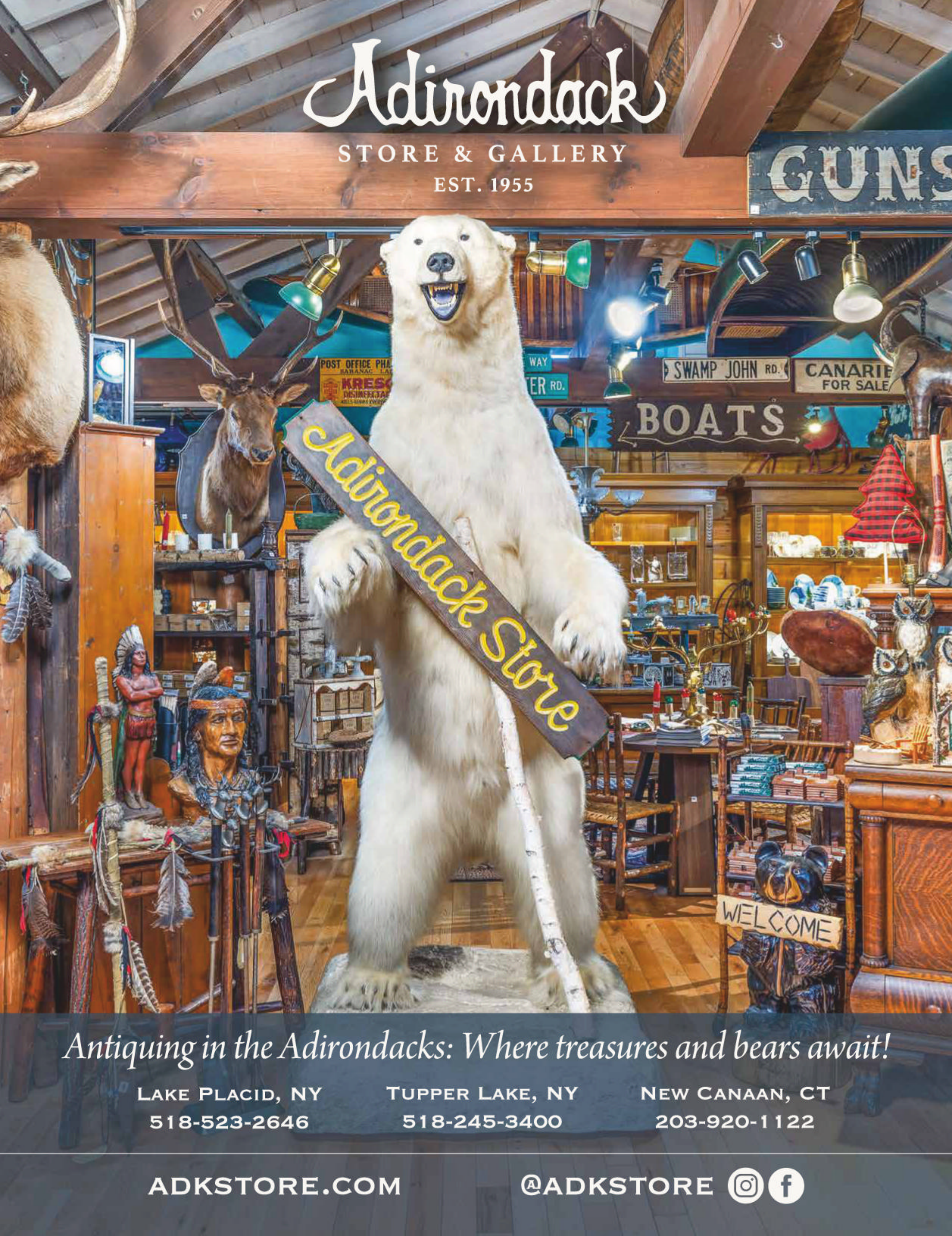
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